



# Wisconsin Trout

Winter 2018

## It's banquet time!

By Mike Kuhr, Council Vice-Chair and 2018 Banquet Committee Chair

Do you have a little “cabin fever”? Not enough open water on your favorite trout stream? Make plans to join your fellow coldwater enthusiasts at the 2018 Wisconsin TU Annual Meeting and State Council Banquet on Saturday, February 3. Please save the date and be a part of the fun in Oshkosh. We will once again return to the Best Western Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center.

This location has served us well in past years and we're looking forward to coming back in February. A limited block of rooms has been set aside for both Friday and Saturday nights. Call the hotel at 855-230-1900 to make your room reservations today. Tell them you're in town for the Trout Unlimited Banquet.

The banquet is our Council's biggest fundraiser of the year. The banquet's success will allow the Council to continue serving local chapters, fund programs like the Youth Camp and STREAM Girls, support our Veterans Service Partnership programs, and help administer our Friends of Wisconsin and Watershed Access grant programs.

Tickets are \$35 each. For more information see the ad on the back page of this issue of Wisconsin Trout. You may also purchase tickets online at <http://wistu.bpt.me>. While we do plan for a few walk-ups every year, ordering tickets in advance or making arrangements to pay at the door and RSVP'ing to [mikek.trout@yahoo.com](mailto:mikek.trout@yahoo.com) are highly encouraged. This event is open to the public, so please consider bringing family, friends, co-workers and neighbors. All are welcome.

Doors will open at 4:30 p.m. and

there will be plenty of time to socialize, visit the cash bar, or simply peruse the bucket raffle and silent auction prizes. Dinner seating will begin at 6:30 p.m.

After dinner we'll hold a live auction for several different fishing trips with some of the top guides and destinations in the state. We'll also take time to recognize some of the best conservationists around with a short awards program. The evening will finish with the announcement of our silent auction and bucket raffle winners.

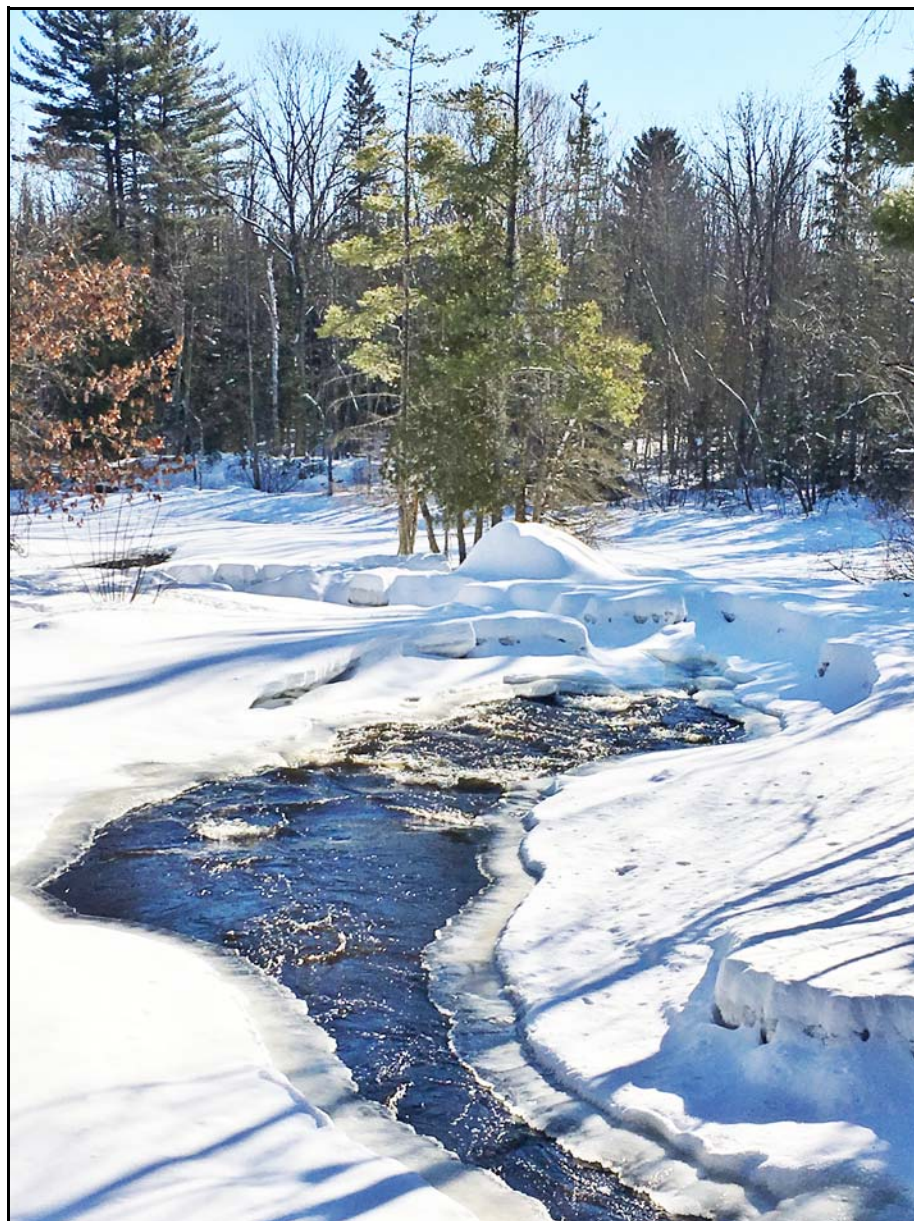
The Council would like to thank all of the chapters and individuals who donate prizes for the event. Your generosity makes for a successful banquet and unforgettable evening for our guests. This year we've assembled more than \$15,000 worth of prizes, and we're eager to give them away!

Chapter leaders should plan on attending the State Council meeting earlier in the day to discuss Council business. The meeting will start promptly at 9 a.m. and run until 2 p.m. Please RSVP to Council Chair Linn Beck if you plan on attending the meeting so we can prepare for lunch.

The State Council will also be sponsoring a Women's Fly Fishing Clinic for beginners who are curious about the sport during the day on Saturday, Feb. 4. This free clinic will run from 9:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. A lunch will be provided. Space is limited, so contact Heidi Oberstadt at [heidi.oberstadt@gmail.com](mailto:heidi.oberstadt@gmail.com).

We've found that these types of events are a great way to introduce trout stream ecology and the importance of TU's conservation work to a new audience.

Much planning has already taken place and the Council is indebted to



Mike Kuhr

### CELEBRATE OUR COLDWATER RESOURCES

Come help us celebrate cold, clean, fishable water, and honor those who've made a difference. Consider Attending the Wisconsin State Council annual banquet on February 3 in Oshkosh.

the work of the Banquet Committee. An event of this scale wouldn't happen without the efforts of committee members Bill Heart, Heidi Oberstadt, Jim Wierzba, Linn Beck, Paul Kruse and Todd Franklin.

We're focused on planning a fun, entertaining and successful banquet. We hope you'll join us in Oshkosh on February 3 to celebrate cold, clean, fishable water in Wisconsin.

## Mining update

*Michigan's Back Forty Mine moves a step closer to reality, while Wisconsin lawmakers repeal the "Prove it First" sulfide mining law.*

By Matt Krueger

### Back Forty Mine

On December 8 the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) deemed Aquila Resources' application for the Back Forty Mine “administratively complete,” representing another step closer to a massive, open-pit sulfide mine operating within a long cast of the Menominee River, the border river between Wisconsin and the U.P. of Michigan.

A public hearing on the wetland permit, the last of four permits required to complete Aquila's application, has been scheduled by DEQ for January 23, 2018 at 6 p.m. at the Stephenson High School gym, W526 Division Street, Stephenson, Michigan. Written comments on the proposed mine can be submitted until February 2, 2018 to <https://miwaters.deq.state.mi.us/miwaters/#/external/publicnotice/info/3338938032851742207/comments> by clicking on “add comment.” Com-

ments can also be submitted by mail to: DEQ Upper Peninsula District Office WRD, 1507 W. Washington Street, Marquette, MI 49855, Attn: Back Forty Mine.

Though the mine is now closer to reality, so is opposition to it. The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin has filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) to sue the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers over jurisdictional issues. The Tribe contends that EPA/USACE jurisdictional authority should supersede the authority of Michigan DEQ on the mining permit, as the permit affects a river of interstate commerce.

Currently, Michigan DEQ has sole authority on decisions related to the mining permit. A response from EPA/Army Corps on the NOI is expected by early January 2018. If the federal agencies do not assume jurisdictional authority on the permit, the Menominee Tribe is expected to file a lawsuit. Additionally, the wetland permit is also receiving considerable scrutiny from wetland experts, working with water advocates in Wisconsin and Michigan.

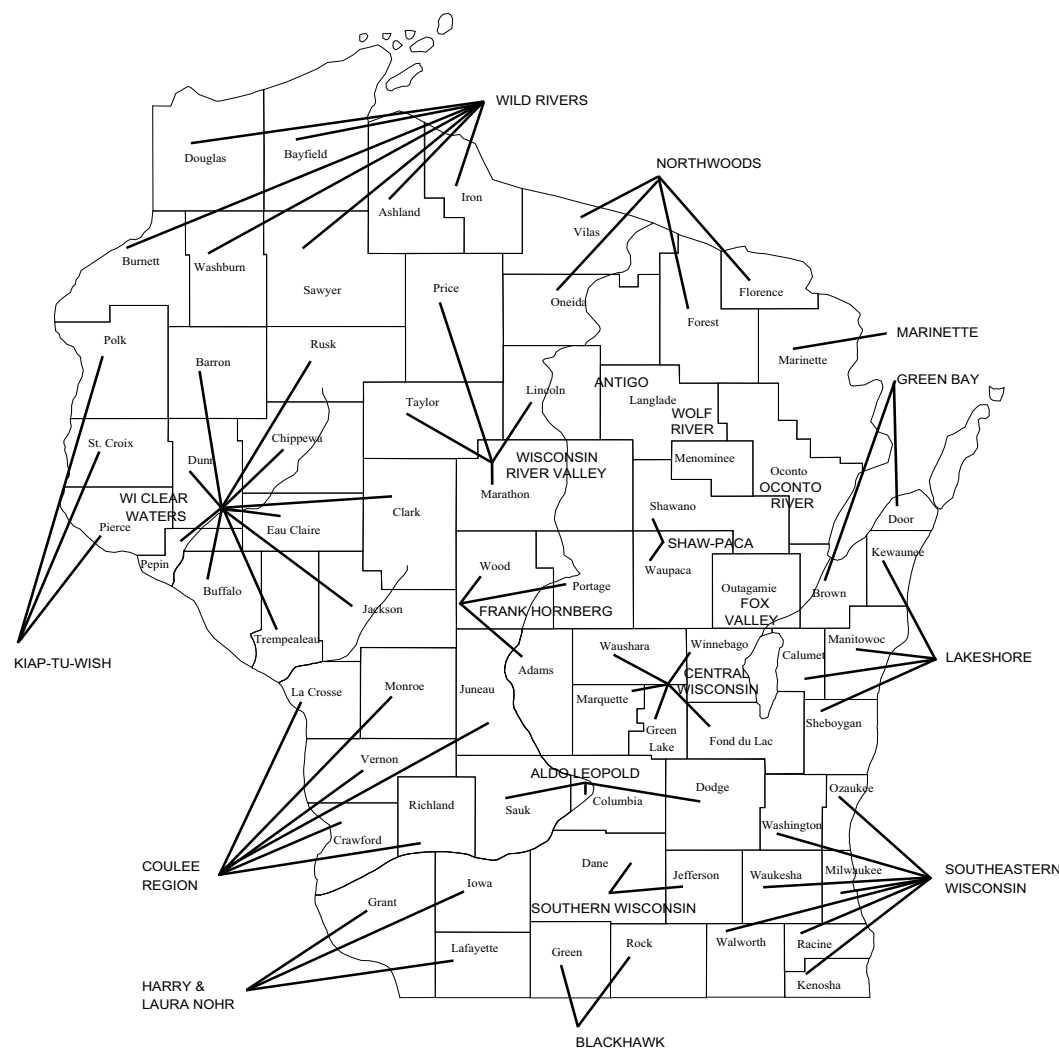
sin and Michigan.

Tight Lines Fly Fishing Company is hosting a fundraising event on Saturday, January 6 in Green Bay to raise awareness about the dangers of the proposed Back Forty Mine, which will feature advocates from the Coalition to Save the Menominee River and the River Alliance of Wisconsin, as well as a gear raffle.

### “Prove It First” mining law repealed

On December 11 Governor Walker signed SB 395/AB 499, which is a full repeal of the bipartisan “Prove It First” sulfide mining law that required would-be mining operations in Wisconsin to prove that they have done so in a similar climate, without polluting during mine operation or 10 years after closure. The bill passed after seven amendments were added to it. The law will not be enacted for six months, to give local communities time to update their zoning and ordinances.

# Wisconsin TU chapters, presidents and contact information



Visit the Wisconsin State Council's web site at [wicouncil.tu.org](http://wicouncil.tu.org), or find us on Facebook.

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## Are you getting emails from TU?

If you are currently not receiving news and event-related email messages from your chapter, the state council and TU National, then you are truly missing out on what's happening at all three levels. TU National manages the mailing list for the council and chapters, so update your address by going to [www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org), log in, then go to "Email Preferences." You can also call 1-800-834-2419 to make these changes, or to ask questions about making the changes via the web site.

## WISCONSIN TROUT

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Photo/article contributions, letters to the editor and advertisements are welcomed. Submit to:

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### State Council Officers

Executive Committee includes officers and vice chairs

**Linn Beck, Chair**

**Mike Kuhr, Vice Chair**

**Tom Lager, Secretary**

**Gary Stoychoff, Treasurer**

Chairman's Column

# Another great year for TU is in the books

*And 2018 promises to be even better, with plenty of opportunities for growth and volunteerism*

I hope all of you had a safe and wonderful holiday season, with everyone getting exactly what you wanted for Christmas. And, of course, with the holiday season ending, it also marked the end of a very great year for TU.

Wisconsin Trout Unlimited chapters had almost 45,000 volunteer hours for the 2017 fiscal year. These hours were spread out over 79 conservation projects and 96 youth education projects. It was a phenomenal year and job well done by all of you.

I know that 2018 will be even better as we continue to develop our youth education and veterans programs. There are a lot of opportunities to give our youth and veterans a chance to experience all that Trout Unlimited has to offer, and to let them show what they can offer to us. It's exciting to see our chapters de-

veloping these programs, reaching out and giving people the chance to experience something new and exciting.

Chapters that add these types of programs and make an effort to promote them are seeing their membership rosters, and membership involvement, grow.

As for the many conservation battles we've endured in 2017, I want to thank all of you for your support. And while I'm at it, thanks in advance for all we will ask of you in 2018. We will need everyone's help on the proposed wetlands bill, and many other important conservation issues.

Thank you for a great 2017. I'm looking forward to an even better 2018.

*Tight Lines,  
Linn*



STATE COUNCIL CHAIR LINN BECK

## LETTERS

### More debate on the Didymo-angler connection

A letter in the Fall 2017 issue of *Wisconsin Trout* absolved anglers and felt boots from helping to spread didymo, known as "rock snot." I had previously written an article about some unpleasant experiences I encountered on Rapid Creek in South Dakota with didymo blooms. At that time I mentioned a conversation with a grad student who said the best guess is that the didymo entered Rapid Creek from the boots of fishermen.

The followup letter by Henry Kanemoto, mentioned above, quoted several studies that seem to indicate that didymo has been found in core samples dating back many years and that it is now forming mats because of low phosphorus environments that have been created by eliminating phosphorus from detergents, cleaning agents and lawn fertilizer.

The conclusion of those studies leaves me with a question. The fact is that during human history detergents, cleaning agents and artificial lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus are all relatively new products. Those products did not exist for most of human history. So, if a suggestion is made that the removal of the phosphorus from those products has caused the mat forming of didymo in some creeks, I would expect that didymo should have been rampant in the pristine early settlement times prior to the existence of those products. It would be interesting to search historic records to see how much mention of didymo is contained in historic journals.

The studies also conclude that iron must be present in streams with low phosphorus to have didymo form mats. Another question I would have deals with the fact that some low phosphorus streams with iron do not have didymo blooms while some others with similar conditions do.

I am not as quick as some to absolve my fellow fishermen from all blame. I will continue to be concerned that if I collect didymo or other invasives on my gear and then transport those species to another stream with similar water chemistry, I could be helping unwanted species to spread.

My preference will always be to err on the safe side. I will continue to clean my gear after a day on a stream that I know harbors didymo or any other potentially harmful species. I would still encourage my fellow anglers to do the same.

—Kim McCarthy, Green Bay

## WITU Youth Fishing Camp marking fifth year

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the WITU Youth Fishing Camp. What a great ride it has been for all of us involved, as we've watched group after group of wonderful youths experience all that is great about fishing, conservation, comraderie and more.

It has been especially gratifying to see the ongoing support from chapters, which have been instrumental in sending us and sponsoring these many great kids. All of our chapters have made sure that any youth interested in attending has received a chance to experience the camp.

This year's camp is July 19-22. Kids will check in at 1 p.m. on Thursday, and we will wrap up shortly after lunch on Sunday. As in past years, the camp will be held at Pine Lake Bible Camp between Wild Rose and Waupaca.

We will be accepting 20 youth for the camp this year, and all chapters have an opportunity to sponsor at least one student. After February 28, chapters can sponsor additional students. Don't hesitate. Nominate your students soon.

We've worked hard to keep costs in line, and sponsorship is still only \$250 per student.

If you know of a youth who is interested in attending, or you have any questions, please contact me at chlbeck@att.net or 920-216-7408, or Wayne Parmley at wparmley@gmail.com or 920-540-2315.

If you are interested in being a volunteer, mentor or "guide," please contact Wayne at the above contact information.

Thanks for your support. We hope to see you in camp this summer.

—Linn Beck

**Our members are celebrating  
25 Years**

partnering with conservation groups to protect and enhance quality lake and river fishing. Through our fundraising efforts, we donate to children's fishing programs, conservation groups such as The River Alliance, and fund boat ramp improvements. We work in cooperation with the Fisheries Bureau, Conservation Congress, and the Natural Resources Board.

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## Isolated wetlands legislation

*Republican bill would remove protections for 20 percent, or 1 million acres, of Wisconsin's remaining wetlands.*

By Matt Krueger and Mike Kuhr

Wisconsin legislators have recently introduced legislation that seeks to significantly roll back statewide wetlands protections, which could potentially harm cold-water habitat and trout streams around the state. The Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited is opposed to this legislation, which is currently being considered in the Legislature.

Authored by Republican Senator Roger Roth and Republican Representatives Jim Steineke and Rob Stafsholt, the legislation seeks to remove protections for "non-federal" wetlands, which make up an estimated 20 percent of Wisconsin's total wetland acreage, or approximately one million acres.

Non-federal wetlands lack a permanent surface water connection to waterbodies like lakes and rivers that are protected by the Clean Water Act. However, these wetlands provide a host of other benefits, such as critical supply of groundwater to coldwater streams, particularly in headwaters sections, as well as protection against flooding, erosion, and nutrient pollution. These wetlands also provide habitat for diverse plant, animal and bird species.

For more information on isolated wetlands, see the articles on pages 14 and 15 of this issue of *Wisconsin Trout*.

If this legislation moves forward, development of these wetlands could occur without a permit or DNR oversight, provided the developer pays into a mitigation fund to create artificial wetlands elsewhere.

Our members value the recreational opportunities that the woods and waters of Wisconsin offer.

We also recognize the economic impacts that trout fishing in par-

ticular, and angling in general, provide to our state. A 2013 study by the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) found that Wisconsin was the third-highest-ranked state in the number of non-resident anglers.

We know the fishing's good here, and apparently so does the rest of the country. According to the ASA report, angling results in more than \$1.4 billion in retail sales each year in our state.

All told, recreational angling creates more than \$2.2 billion in annual economic impact for Wisconsin's economy.

The Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited recognizes that wetlands, even if "isolated" or "ephemeral" (another term for non-federal wetlands), have a vital connection to trout streams. For this reason, the council joins fellow sporting organizations in opposing this legislation.

Other opponents of the bill include the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Ducks Unlimited, the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

Supporters of the bill include Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, the Dairy Business Association, as well as cranberry growers and the state builders association.

TU members are encouraged to contact their legislators and voice their opposition to this legislation. Watch your email for State Council alerts, which include all the necessary information for contacting your own representatives, as well as those on the committees which will determine whether the bills go to the full legislature.

If you haven't been receiving emails from the State Council, contact TU National and make sure they have your current email address.

## Legislative update

# News on the GLRI, public lands and Asian Carp

By Taylor Ridderbusch

### Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

In November the Senate Appropriations Committee released the FY 2018 Interior and Environment funding bill, which includes \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). TU will continue to work with Congress to ensure that the GLRI receives full funding annually. For an in-depth look at GLRI dollars at work in the Great Lakes region, check out the feature in the Winter 2018 edition of *TROUT Magazine*.

### Public Lands

In early December the Trump administration announced it would be cutting two national monuments in Utah, Bears Ears and the Grand Staircase Escalante, by 85 percent and by more than 50 percent, respectively. This jeopardizes the 112-year-old Antiquities Act, a conservation tool that has been used to

protect public lands revered by hunters and anglers, such as the Arkansas River in Colorado and Rio Grande del Norte in New Mexico.

This law has been used equally by Republicans and Democrats alike, often when other stakeholder-driven efforts to conserve important habitat and sporting opportunities have stalled in Congress. For more information, and to contact your representatives visit <http://stand-up.tu.org/protect-our-public-lands/>.

### Asian carp

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers concluded its public comment period in December regarding the report which outlined various plans for addressing the spread of Asian Carp at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam. TU is hopeful that the Corps will move forward with the Tentatively Selected Plan (Technology Alternative: Electric Barrier with Complex Noise) and will continue to urge the Corps to expedite the completion of the project.

## New Zealand mudsnails found in two new streams

Two recent discoveries of the invasive New Zealand mudsnail (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*) in southern Wisconsin trout streams indicate not only are the invasive snails spreading, but anglers are likely spreading them.

With Wisconsin DNR's announcement this week of mudsnails in Rowan and Mount Vernon creeks, the number of trout streams in the region infested with the snails grows to four (Black Earth Creek snails were discovered in October 2013, and Badger Mill Creek in December 2016). There are no other known infestations of the snail in inland Wisconsin streams.

"The recent discoveries of New Zealand mudsnails in two more southern Wisconsin streams are truly a call to action to those who recreate on rivers and streams, particularly, wading anglers," said Matt Krueger, River Restoration Program Director of the River Alliance of Wisconsin. "It's alarming how quickly these snails are spreading. If we are to protect other streams from their negative impacts, anglers need to make 'clean angling' disinfection practices a common part of their pre-and post-fishing routine."

The New Zealand mudsnail is highly invasive in western states and is known to reach high abundances, outcompete native stream insects that serve as food for fish such as trout, and can alter the natural functions of streams.

It remains to be seen what impacts the snail will have on streams in Wisconsin, but there is concern is that they will affect the health of trout. Research on the Black Earth Creek mudsnail infestation shows that the in-stream population is rapidly expanding.

While it's hard to know definitively how aquatic invasive species get transported, in all probability wading anglers are spreading New Zealand mudsnails. "Here's a very real scenario that is likely spreading

mudsnails," said Krueger. "An angler fishes in an infested stream like Black Earth Creek, picks up mud and mudsnails on his or her boots, and doesn't disinfect the muddy boots or waders after fishing. The next week, the same angler enters a new stream, the mud containing the still-live snail drops off, and a new infestation has begun."

It is essential that wading anglers, as well as other stream users such as paddlers and water quality monitors, prevent the spread of mudsnails and other invasive species by inspecting equipment and removing all plants, animals, mud and debris, prior to leaving a stream. Then, drain all water from gear and equipment prior to leaving stream, allowing to fully dry for at least 26 days before next use. Finally, in the case of New Zealand mudsnails, we can all take additional steps, such as scrubbing gear (especially boots) with a brush, freezing gear, or soaking it in 120°F water.

Anglers should avoid the use of felt-soled wading boots to decrease the likelihood of spreading invasive species to other streams, or use a different pair of wading boots while allowing the other pair to dry for 26 days.

Response efforts to the recent infestations of New Zealand mudsnails are being initiated by a coalition including the River Alliance of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, local Trout Unlimited chapters, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, Lower Sugar River Watershed Association and Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development Council.

—River Alliance of Wisconsin



Scott W. Grady  
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## Donate to TU via Thrivent Lutheran

If you are a TU member and have investments with Thrivent Lutheran Financial, you may have the ability to make charitable donations to groups of your choosing through Thrivent Financial's Thrivent Choice program.

The Wisconsin Council of TU is now a listed entity within the Thrivent Choice program.

If you are a Thrivent member and have the ability to make Thrivent Choice donations, we would be honored if you'd consider including the Wisconsin Council of TU within your charitable planning, and making a donation to our cause.



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## TOUR BY BUS...AND BY TRACTOR



Dennis Barth

The first hayride in Driftless Project Bus Tour history helped a busload of folks get to the streamside along Mill Creek near Chatfield, Minnesota. The mid-October tour focused on several innovative Minnesota projects on Mill, Pine and Rush Creek and Garvin Brook west of Winona. Stream designers and equipment operators viewed projects and questioned those who'd produced them. The goal of these TUDARE-sponsored tours is to encourage exchange of information and techniques across the entire Driftless Area.



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## Two TUDARE events coming soon

### Driftless Symposium

During the past decade, TUDARE's Driftless Symposium in La Crosse has become one of the go-to events where scientists, researchers and volunteers interested in Driftless Area watershed restoration gather to exchange information. Speakers report on their research on coldwater streams and their denizens. Technicians talk about techniques they are developing in the numerous stream projects carried out in this region each year.

On February 5 and 6 they'll meet at the La Crosse Convention Center for a day and a half of informative sessions, idea exchange and social opportunities. Costs are expected to be about \$90 for the entire event, including materials, symposium events, meals and a Monday evening social at the Freighthouse Restaurant.

"We've got a great lineup coming together for the Symposium," said TUDARE Project Manager Jeff Hastings. "We'll have keynote speakers, talks on brook trout genetics research and riparian restoration by the pros who are doing it in the streams, and a whole series highlighting the research that's been done on the impacts of the restoration that TUDARE and its partners are doing. It should be a stimulating two days."

An in-depth look at conservation in the Tainter Creek watershed in Crawford and Vernon counties will include talks on grazing, prairie strips and how to evaluate impacts of restoration. University of Minnesota Professor Mary Marczak will discuss how project planning can

benefit from a widely diverse group of planners.

For registration, agenda and other information, check out [DArestitution.com](http://DArestitution.com).

### Westby Project Planning Workshop

A wide range of aspects of organizing good watershed restoration projects will be the focus of the Westby Project Planning Workshop April 7-8 at Living Waters Bible Camp, in the headwaters of the West Fork of the Kickapoo River. This biennial workshop has trained more than 500 people from across the Midwest how to organize, fund and carry out quality stream restoration projects. Past workshops have had sessions on fund-raising, building partnerships, carrying out quality work days, media outreach and inviting a wide range of community groups to participate.

The Westby workshop includes notable speakers from across the region, entertaining speakers including authors and poets, and occasional surprises. You'll come away with a handy manual for your chapter or council's future projects. Not only that, but it takes place as trout fishing on area streams really starts to heat up.

More information on agenda, costs, and lodging will be provided on the TU Driftless Area Restoration Effort Facebook page and at [DArestitution.com](http://DArestitution.com). Low-cost lodging can be arranged at the Bible Camp and numerous motels serve anglers in the Westby, Viroqua and Coon Valley areas.

—Duke Welter

## Northeast Region pledges \$49K for habitat projects

By Laura MacFarland, TU Great Lakes Stream Restoration Manager and Doug Erdmann, Northeast Region Vice Chair

In early December seven chapters from the northeast region met at the Timberhaven Bar & Grill in Polar and pledged \$49,500 for habitat projects in 2018. Those chapters were the Wild Rivers, Northwoods, Green Bay, Marinette, Oconto, Wolf River and Antigo.

The funding included:

- \$15,500 to help fund the Lakewood habitat crew.
- \$15,000 to help fund the Antigo habitat crew.
- \$5,000 for beaver control on Hauer Creek in Sawyer County
- \$5,000 for the North Branch Oconto River restoration.
- \$4,000 for Spring Meadow dam removal in Vilas County.
- \$3,000 for fuel to dredge Mayking Flowage in Langlade County
- \$2,000 for a fisheries technician for the U.S. Forest Service.

TU Great Lakes Stream Restoration Manager Laura MacFarland also received a grant earlier this year for \$36,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program 2017, to improve the North Branch of the Oconto River. This grant will provide an additional \$13,000 for the Lakewood habitat crew and \$5,000 for U.S. Forest Service fisheries technicians who will partner with Trout Unlimited to improve instream habitat and fishability through the Town of Wabeno.

We are grateful to everyone who help make these projects a reality.

### Give us your feedback

As a Wisconsin TU member, Wisconsin Trout is your publication. We welcome your suggestions and hope you will take a few minutes to give us your feedback.

What do you like about Wisconsin Trout?

Is there anything you'd like to see more of?

Are there any specific topics you'd like us to cover?

Do you like the addition of color to select pages?

Please share your ideas, suggestions, comments and criticisms by sending them to [toddfranklinwis trout@gmail.com](mailto:toddfranklinwis trout@gmail.com).

*"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."*

*William Shakespeare*

## Remember TU as Part of Your Legacy

*Have you considered making Trout Unlimited part of your legacy? For loyal TU members, making a bequest to TU in your will or trust is a wonderful way to continue supporting clean water and healthy trout populations. Help assure that TU is able to continue its good work now and into the future.*

*Should you decide that TU is worthy of a legacy bequest, be sure to specify in your will or trust if the bequest is intended to benefit National TU, the State Council or your local chapter.*

*Thank you for considering Trout Unlimited in your estate planning.*

## Commentary

# A personal history of the Driftless Area's amazing trout recovery

Retired DNR Fisheries Biologist Dave Vetrano experienced — and played a huge role in — the amazing transformation of southwest Wisconsin into a world-class trout fishery.

By David Vetrano,  
Retired DNR Fisheries Biologist for  
the LaCrosse Area.

I thought it might be time for me to clear up any misconceptions there are about my statement on the so-called “Wisconsin Trout Wars” by those who know me and think I may have “drank the Kool-Aid.” Most of my comments are meant for the Driftless Area, and especially the La Crosse Area.

When I started in La Crosse in 1980, most area streams were much different than they are today. There was almost no natural reproduction.

The streams were wide, shallow with little overhead cover and significantly warmer. Streams like Timber Coulee were full of carp, redhorse suckers and creek chubs.

The only real trout fishery was supplied by the tens of thousands of domestic strain brook, brown and rainbow trout that were stocked in the same streams and in the same numbers that they had been for decades.

Although there was an early “kill” season, most of the fishing pressure occurred with the traditional May opener when most anglers fished for the recently stocked hatchery trout that had not moved far from the bridge holes they were stocked in days before.

Car counts and creel surveys showed heavy fishing pressure the first weekend. After the second weekend only the most dedicated anglers were fishing for the few trout that had survived the opening weekend onslaught.

For those anglers, fishing could be good. The survivors had an abundant food supply in the more than 20 species of forage fish available so growth rates were good. When brown trout reach 12-13

inches in length they become almost total “piscivores.” They want to eat meat. Although there were not many fish in the streams, trout over 20 inches were caught each year.

By the mid 1980's things started to change. A serious downturn in the farm economy left many producers unable to compete. High mortgage interest rates and low commodity prices forced many

farmers out, idling thousands of acres of land. Some relief came with the 1985 Farm Bill that paid landowners with highly erodible lands to plant them with cover crops.

As perennial vegetation increased on former cropland,

we started to see more groundwater percolation of rainwater and snowmelt. This resulted in more base flow (water seeping into the stream from the land on both sides), more spring flow and colder water temperatures.

In 1984, I changed the way we did trout habitat restoration by adding a 4:1 slope to the stream banks, reconnecting them to their floodplain. We also developed LUNKERS structures that were easy to construct on site and reduced installation costs by 30 percent and maintenance costs by more than 90 percent. After habitat restoration, we saw trout numbers in many streams increase by 1,500 percent.

Carryover of stocked trout increased as stream conditions improved, allowing fish to occupy stream segments formerly too warm for most of the season. By the end of the decade we began to find (for the first time) natural reproduction of brown trout in a number of streams.

This phenomenon was also observed by my peers in other parts of the Driftless Area in Wisconsin, as well as Minnesota and Iowa.

*If more liberal regulations are the answer to reversing the “serious decline in trout fishing,” why am I not seeing an increase in bait anglers?*

Not surprisingly, anglers began to discover the Driftless Area as word of the improving fishery made it through angling circles. Anglers from more than 50 miles away began to fish streams the local anglers had called their own for many years.

Many of these new anglers were not as interested in filling the creel as they were in perfecting their fishing techniques and enjoying the “Zen” qualities that come from Driftless stream fishing.

In the late 1980's, I became a member of the DNR Trout Committee. Our charge was to use science to come up with a new set of regulations to manage trout in Wisconsin.

In my naiveté, I thought one could put 8 or 9 fisheries biologists in the same room to talk trout and we would be out in a few hours with a finished product. It took us two years to come up

with a regulation package that we hoped would address the changing attitudes of anglers as well as maximizing all of the state's complex and dynamic water bodies' ability to produce trout.

The rule package was never meant to be the final effort on managing trout. Many of the rule proposals had not been tried before. But we would never learn to manage trout better if we didn't try some new concepts. Any good scientist knows failures are successes.

With that in mind, we also implemented a process to monitor these rules with the intent to simplify overlapping regulations, and get rid of those that did not meet their original intentions.

As expected, the rule changes were not totally accepted by the entire angling community. A few streams that had been open to harvest were now “catch and release and artificial lures” only. We were accused of catering to an elite few, especially fly anglers at the expense of those who preferred spinners or live bait, even though 96 percent of state streams had no bait restrictions.

At the same time as the Trout Committee meetings, several of us biologists toyed with the idea of stocking our streams with more “wild” trout strains. Hatchery fish were designed to grow big and fast, but lacked some basic survival characteristics.

In their defense, the hatcheries were only responding to the fisheries biologists' requests. When we filled out our trout quotas each year, we demanded legal size fish

(7-9 inches) be available when the streams were stocked in late April before the May opener.

The only way for the hatcheries to accomplish this was to take more eggs from early spawners and hold the subsequent fingerlings over for a whole year. Even if these fish survived to spawn after stocking, their young would emerge from the redds in the middle of winter. Not the easiest time to survive when stream temperatures are cold and food availability is low.

Because of the high numbers of trout that biologists were demanding, the hatcheries were forced to crowd raceways and feed in the easiest manner possible.

This usually meant feeding by hand. This trained fish to feed when they saw a silhouette or shadow on the raceway, which is not a good survival technique when

they are stocked in a stream full of anglers, kingfishers, otters and blue herons.

To get around this, some of us started to transfer wild trout from one stream to another. This worked until diseases such as viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) arrived. So we looked at developing a statewide wild trout program that would provide feral strains of both brook and brown trout to stock into streams where conditions were improving and natural reproduction was almost a certainty.

In La Crosse, using some hatching trays that we borrowed from the Wild Rose hatchery, we converted an old springhouse, which was once used to cool milk, into a small covert hatchery on state land.

Using what I learned spawning suckers for musky

feed, we stripped eggs and milt from feral spawning brook and brown trout. The eggs were hatched and eventually transferred to an outside raceway where they were held until the following spring and stocked as what are called “holdovers.”

To reduce human contact, the fish were fed using timed, automatic feeders that only dispensed during the daytime. We also placed covers along the raceways to acclimate the young fish to overhead cover. Between 1990 and 1994, three to eight thousand feral trout were raised each year and stocked in La Crosse-area streams. Most streams were reclassified to Class I as better survival and more natural reproduction occurred.

Understandably, leaders at the DNR's central office in Madison



DAVID VETRANO

*“I was witness to an amazing trout recovery in my career with the DNR. I hope the next generation will not see it disappear.”*



Todd Franklin

### NATIONAL TU LEADERS TOUR DRIFTLESS STREAMS

The success of trout stream restoration and wild stocking efforts in southwest Wisconsin convinced Trout Unlimited to hold its national meeting in Middleton in 2013. On this day two tour buses filled with TU leaders from throughout the country witness a shocking demonstration on Iowa County's Blue River.



Todd Franklin

### THEY COME FROM HOURS AWAY TO FISH AND TO HELP

TU members from near and far, such as volunteers like Stan Zarnowecki (left) travel often from hours away to help with stream restoration projects and provide financial support for restoration efforts. This was a LUNKER-building day on Bear Creek in Sauk County, which drew TU members from numerous chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois.

was reluctant to make a major change in hatchery production without more study. Subsequent research proved that wild-strain trout out-survived domestic-stain fish by a factor of 6:1 after one year. A statewide wild trout program began in 1995 and continues today.

By this time most Driftless Area waters were going through a major change in temperature and species composition. Streams that less than two decades ago were populated by many warm-water minnow species were changing to a coldwater species assemblage.

The shift to colder water also meant a surge in the aquatic insects. Caddisflies, mayflies and scuds became abundant as conditions improved.

Streams like Bohemian Valley and Timber Coulee went from 100-200 trout per mile in the early 1980's to numbers that exceeded 3,000 trout per mile. While numbers increased, the size structure began to decline in some streams.

Brown trout grow the largest and fastest when they have large amounts of protein such as minnows or crayfish and in water temps that are a little warmer than what brook trout prefer. Lower stretches of larger streams and rivers became (and still are) the areas to catch big brown trout.

While the number of naturally reproducing streams increased, so did the number of non-local anglers. More and more anglers fished streams that less than 20 years ago had few trout.

As angler numbers increased, so did the opportunities for entrepreneurs. Sports clubs developed strong relationships with city folks as TU chapters from urban areas began funding and volunteering for habitat restoration projects that were hours away from their homes.

Other people built or renovated cabins to rent to anglers. Restaurants saw an increase in out-of-town customers.

As word got out about the ever-improving trout fishery, National TU initiated a large project on the Kickapoo watershed. This was only the second time they funded a Home Waters Initiative program. Their goal was to provide funding for stream surveys, habitat restoration and an economic study of the ever-improving fishery.

Through this effort, we were able to survey tributaries of the Kickapoo River that had never been surveyed. We kept finding more and more trout.

My peers in Minnesota and Iowa

were seeing the same things.

A 2008 economic study found that trout fishing in the Driftless Area was a \$1.1-billion dollar industry and growing. By the time I retired in 2010, we had reclassified more than 395 miles of new trout water. There were now more than 1,000 miles of classified trout water just in the four counties of the La Crosse Area.

Do a Google search today for "Driftless Area Trout Fishing," and you'll get more than 50,000 results. That's not bad for a fishery that barely existed 30 years ago.

I once estimated how long it would take an angler to fish all of the classified waters in my four-county area (La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford and Monroe) and not fish the same water twice. I used creel data that estimated average trip length at about 2.5 hours. I also only considered the statewide trout opener and the former September 30 closure date. I estimated it would take an angler 23 years to fish all of the trout streams in my area and not fish the same water twice.

Currently, we have a trout fishery that rivals any of the western and northeastern sections of the country in sheer numbers of fish and easy access. There are more trout in area streams now than any time since European settlement. Stocking trout is a thing of the past for almost all waters in the La Crosse Area, as there is sufficient natural reproduction to maintain the fishery.

In 2016 TU updated its earlier economic study on the Driftless Area. Trout stream fishing is now a \$1.6-billion industry, and there is every reason to think this trend will continue.

Unfortunately, there are a very small number of vocal anglers who insist that the trout resource in southwest Wisconsin is being mismanaged by the DNR. To quote their leader, "the micro-management program that began in 1990 has been an unmitigated disaster."

Webster defines "disaster" as "a sudden or great misfortune." How one can describe having more than 3,000 trout per mile as a "disaster" is puzzling.

They would also have you believe that the complexity of "special regulations" is driving anglers away from the sport. They are especially insistent that there is a "war" on anglers who use live bait and keep trout.

One of the most important lessons I learned in more than 33 years working for DNR was to stick with

the biology. Because every angler who fishes for trout in Wisconsin buys a trout stamp, my job was to provide as many different angling opportunities as possible to all of the different user groups.

A live bait angler had just as much "say" as did a dry fly angler. If I stepped into the world of "social" fisheries management, I would put myself in a position I could not defend biologically.

While I did say there could be no size limit and no bag limit on the waters I once managed, that is not the same as saying that current management is a disaster. I have observed, and recent creel surveys confirm, that on most streams in my area, anglers do not keep fish, regardless of the regulation, period.

One of my favorite streams has a 10-fish bag limit with no size limit. I recommended this regulation before I retired. This is my go-to stream to catch some trout to eat. I throw back anything over 12 inches and will keep nine fish, if I can catch them. Nine fish is three meals of three for my wife and I. For the last several years, the only time I see people fishing with live bait and keeping fish is on opening day and the other anglers are all friends of mine on our annual outing.

All of the other times I fish it, most others anglers I encounter on the stream are using flies and releasing fish. If more liberal regulations are the answer to reversing the "serious decline in trout fishing", why am I not seeing an increase in bait anglers?

Almost all of the streams I used to manage now have more liberal regulations than before I retired in 2010. Rarely do I see someone carrying a creel.

Another "quest" by the vocal minority is to open the early season to harvest. While I do not think an early harvest season will make a difference from a population standpoint, I do think it will affect the size structure of many streams.

In the 1980's I did a tagging study on several streams in the Coon Creek system. We tagged every fish over 10 inches. I wanted to get a better idea of fish movement, growth and angler harvest. On one stream, Spring Coulee, I had tagged nine fish over 20 inches. On one weekend in April when stream conditions were perfect, four of those big fish were caught and killed.

It was common knowledge by most anglers that the early season back then was the time to catch those bigger trout. They were hungry, concentrated in a few pools and because of the colder temperatures, not the "tackle busters" they are in the warmer, regular season. I have no doubt larger brown trout would again be more vulnerable to early season harvest.

I wish the small group of vocal anglers would be more concerned about the true "war on trout" that comes in the form of the current political interference in resource management. High-capacity well proliferation, concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO's), the continued erosion of the Public Trust Doctrine, sulfide mining and the absolute denial that climate change could exist are far stronger threats to our coldwater resource than a 3- or 5-fish bag limit is. It won't matter what regulations are on streams if there are no trout to catch.

We need to recognize that our state streams will never be like they were before European settlement. There's not a lake, river or stream in the state that has not been perturbed by agriculture, logging or development. Our goal should be to protect what we currently have and give our waters the chance to be all they can be.

I was witness to an amazing trout recovery in my career with DNR. I hope the next generation will not see it disappear.

*David Vetrano worked as a fisheries biologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for more than 33 years. Almost all of his time was spent managing the coldwater program in streams of the Driftless Area in southwest Wisconsin. While there he witnessed the streams change from "put and take" heavily stocked waters to self-sustaining streams with very little stocking.*

*Since his retirement in 2010, Vetrano has served on several agricultural boards promoting managed grazing systems. He currently lives on a farm where he pastures Jersey steers. His wife, Linda, is a trained culinary chef, has a specialty dessert business.*

*Vetrano has a Bachelor of Science degree in fisheries from the University of Wisconsin — Stevens Point.*



Todd Franklin

### FEWER ANGLERS KEEPING LARGE TROUT

Over the decades, as wild trout in Driftless Area's streams replaced stocked trout, many anglers turned from harvesting large trout to harvesting fewer, smaller trout.

## Check out our Facebook pages

We're getting social. The Council now has an official Wisconsin Trout Unlimited Facebook page at [facebook.com/WisconsinTU](https://facebook.com/WisconsinTU). So go ahead and give us a "Like!" We've also set up a Wisconsin Trout Unlimited State Council "group" on Facebook for people to share upcoming event info and conservation-related news.

# Dane County's big "new" trout stream

*Thanks to the efforts of many partners, a former "drive-by" river just minutes from the state capitol is being discovered by hikers, paddlers and trout anglers.*

By Topf Wells

Dane County has recently achieved a rare and maybe unique feat: discovering, restoring and securing public access on a big and mostly unknown trout stream. The stream is the Sugar River as it flows along Highway 69, south of Verona and north of Belleville. The story goes back about 10 years.

For decades Dane County had been a wonderful partner with the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited (SWTU), the Dane County Conservation League, Badger Flyfishers and other local conservation organizations in working with landowners to protect trout streams.

About 10 years ago, the county combined that effort with a program to purchase permanent easements permitting public fishing access to and restoration of such streams. The effort succeeded beyond expectations, and more than 20 miles of stream have been restored and opened to public fishing.

A busy angler would take several seasons to fish all the water on such excellent Dane County streams such as Black Earth Creek, Vermont Creek, Pleasant

Valley Creek, German Valley Creek, Syfestad Creek, Kittleson Creek, Gordon Creek, Token Creek, Frye Feeder, Deer Creek and the West Branch of the Sugar River.

Some of these are well-known blue ribbon streams; many of the others are vital headwaters of those blue ribbon systems. While the county focused on easements, it also bought larger parcels of land on these creeks whenever possible for a wider variety of outdoor recreation.

## Languishing in obscurity

Four years ago the county turned its attention to the Sugar River, a river with some noteworthy features. The Sugar is probably the easternmost trout stream in the

Driftless Area, and is one of the biggest. It exists on the edge of the state's most rapidly growing metropolitan area.

Nevertheless, the river languished in obscurity. When the DNR noted it was a cold/cool water fishery several years ago, that designation received almost no attention. A few locals fished the river and enjoyed the trophy trout they found there. Many years ago, the county and TU had worked with a landowner in the upper part of the river, but that was largely forgotten. Most folks, including TU members, drove by the river with little thought of what it might hold or what its future could be.

Thankfully, Sara Rigelman and Laura Hicklin, respectively the Dane County Stream Easement Coordinator and Director of the Acquisition Program, knew better and seized opportunities as they occurred.

The first was the chance to buy 400 acres of land with more than a mile of Sugar River frontage from the Bruce Company. It is now known as the Falk/Wells Wildlife Area.

Then the Neperuds, a conservation-minded family, sold the county a lovely 100-acre farm with another mile of the river. That is now

the Basco Wildlife Area. A month ago, the county purchased an easement for a half mile of stream from the Sarbacher family.

With these purchases, trout anglers took notice and discovered a treasure. To the surprise of many, the river contains great habitat: riffles, meanders, deep holes, gravel and rock stream bottom, shaded stretches with fish-holding woody debris.

With such habitat comes a rich diversity of trout food: mayflies, caddis, craneflies, crayfish and schools of minnows, shiners, and chubs. And, oh yes, trout. Besides the occasional big trout one would expect in such water, the biggest surprises were the number and age

*"Young of the year trout, and trout of all sizes from 6 inches to 14 inches call the Sugar home and all are wild brown trout."*



Tom Parker

## BEAUTIFUL TROUT RIVER JUST SOUTH OF MADISON

This photo shows a section of Sugar River on the Neperud property prior to restoration efforts. It is now the Basco Wildlife Area.

range of trout. Young of the year trout, and trout of all sizes from 6 inches to 14 inches call the Sugar home and all are wild brown trout. DNR records show that the river has not been stocked since the mid-1990s.

Like most Driftless Area trout streams, as good as the Sugar was, it has some problems. Past land use had left some areas that were too wide and shallow and some badly eroding stream banks. The result is that the river has some of its great habitat broken up by segments that needed help.

Rigelman enabled the county to find partners for some much-needed restorations. Last August saw the completion of a two-year project on about 2/3 of a mile of stream on the Neperud farm. SWTU donated funds and volunteer labor to help, and rallied our State Council, National TU, the Southeast Wisconsin TU Chapter and many local organizations such as Badger Fly Fishers, Dane County Conservation League, Madison Fishing Expo, the DNR, Madison Orvis, and Sitka Salmon to contribute funds and more volunteers. By the way, never pass up a joint work day with the Southeast Wisconsin TU crew, especially if they provide the brats.

The DNR saw the project as an opportunity to use some techniques that have been quite successful on central Wisconsin trout streams, in particular the latest versions of bank covers. With Rigelman's coordination, the stream benefitted from an all-star DNR team including the operations crews from Wild Rose, Fitchburg and Eagle and fish biologists Shawn Sullivan, Bradd Sims, David Rowe, Kurt Welke, Tim Simonson and Dan Oele.

The county, DNR and SWTU sponsored an event to demonstrate bank cover construction and their applicability to Driftless streams. County and federal conservation agencies and local landowners and contractors were invited.

## Beyond in-stream work

The restorations go beyond in-stream work. In order to have more stable stream banks and better habitat for birds, pollinators and other wildlife, SWTU has been restoring prairies on county properties, and the county is taking invasives out of

an oak ridge at the Neperud site.

To provide cooling shade and richer near-stream habitat, SWTU is planting native hardwoods and shrubs. The chapter has had and will continue to schedule work days to improve angler accessibility and remove yet more invasive vegetation. This fall and winter's effort includes controlled burns and more planting.

Next year the county will undertake a two-year restoration of the most problematic segment of the river. It is a wide, warm, shallow, silty stretch of several hundred yards in the Falk/Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area. Rigelman's research has confirmed that channelization and impoundment of the river which occurred at least 80 years ago are the source of the problems.

## Variety of river users

Trout anglers are not the only folks happy about the Sugar River. Kayakers and paddlers enjoy the river in ever-increasing numbers. They have become the dominant hatch on the river during mid-summer weekends. Many other people have found the joy of walking both parcels. The scenery always includes the lovely river and wildlife, including a pair of bald eagles that regularly patrol the river. The county has just constructed a hiking trail on Falk/Wells to encourage this activity.

Rigelman and Hicklin are working with nearby landowners to improve access to and habitat in the stream. It's work that is receiving support from Paoli, a small community of shops, galleries, an artisan brewer, and restaurants right in the middle of the Sugar's fishing waters. One of Wisconsin's best new cheesemakers is about to make Paoli home. Paoli makes the Sugar River one of the nicest streams to fish when the fish aren't biting.

One might wonder: well, this is all well and good, but why not keep your mouth shut about all this wonderful fishing and let people discover it on their own? Here's why: because the Madison metropolitan area is expanding so rapidly, with much of that growth heading toward the Sugar River.

The world famous and ever-expanding Epic company and campus are about eight minutes from Paoli.



Jim Beecher

## TOPF WELLS AT HIS NAMESAKE WILDLIFE AREA

Named after Topf Wells and former Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk, the Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife area features trails, wildlife and trout fishing.



The county also purchased 30 acres with half a mile of frontage on the Sugar River next to Epic. A key spring complex is on that parcel.

The river needs champions now and even more so in the future. The best champions will be those folks who love it because they have experienced it.

**Dane County's conservation program**

Back to Dane County. Several Wisconsin counties have wonderful conservation programs with an emphasis on coldwater resources and probably others elsewhere in the country do, too. But I doubt that many do as much as Dane County in the face of such rapid, persistent growth. That a fairly unknown, excellent wild trout fishery existed within 25 minutes of a state capitol is pretty extraordinary. That a local government has spent so much time and money to preserve, improve, and make it available to the public before it is degraded is perhaps even more noteworthy.

Obviously and thankfully, the county has many individuals and organizations as partners in this effort. Special mention is due the

Upper Sugar River Watershed Association. The association has improved paddler safety and access on the river and led the fight against the New Zealand Mud Snail, recently discovered in a tributary. It has secured grants to help farmers along the river improve water quality. In another first for the river and Dane County, the association just brought the DNR and volunteers together to re-introduce native mussels. Take that, mud snails!

While Rigelman and Hicklin, now the Director of the County's Land and Water Conservation Department, are among the key county staff to have planned and implemented the county's preservation of the Sugar River, the county's elected leaders, county executives Kathleen Falk and now Joe Parisi, and the Dane County Board of Supervisors have enthusiastically led and reliably funded that effort.

County Executive Parisi and Dane County Board Chair Sharon Corrigan have made the Sugar River a key focal point. Kevin Connors, recently retired director of the County's Land and Water Conservation Department, had been a champion of the Sugar River Watershed throughout his tenure.



Tom Parker

**ALL-STAR DNR CREW WORKS ON SUGAR RIVER**

The Sugar River benefitted from an all-star DNR team including the operations crews from Wild Rose, Fitchburg and Eagle and fish biologists Shawn Sullivan, Bradd Sims, David Rowe, Kurt Welke, Tim Simonson and Dan Oele.

Stop by the Sugar River the next time you're near. Fish it, walk it, paddle it. You'll have a blast. And take an optimistic lesson from the Sugar. When you get home, look around at some of those rivers and creeks that everyone just seems to drive over in route to somewhere else. You might find a really cool resource and some folks who'll help make it better.

*Topf Wells is a long-time member*

*of the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited and currently serves on its board. He worked for Dane County for 15 years and was one of the Dane County staff who created the county trout stream restoration and easement programs. He has been one of the most active SWTU volunteers on the Neperud project.*



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**AND FOR A LITTLE BIT MORE EACH YEAR, YOU CAN PERSONALIZE YOUR PLATES**

**What exactly is the NLC?**

By Kim McCarthy, WITU NLC Representative

Ever since I became Wisconsin's TU National Leadership Council Representative, I have been struck by how many of our members don't fully understand what the NLC is. NLC stands for National Leadership Council. The NLC is part of National TU's leadership structure and is made up of one representative from each state council. Its primary function is to help establish the national organization's conservation agenda.

Various areas of concern in the conservation area are looked at by the NLC, considered for national attention, and focus areas are chosen for attention by the NLC. Some areas currently on the NLC's list of focus areas are climate change, access, Great Lakes, mining, diversity, Driftless Area, and youth education. A complete list can be found on the National TU website at [tu.org](http://tu.org).

Once a topic has been selected as a focal point, the NLC forms a work group around that topic. Each NLC representative is expected to serve on at least two work groups. The groups discuss how to assist the national organization in its efforts.

As an example, I am currently serving as the vice chair of the Youth Education Work Group and as the chair of the Mining Work Group. The Youth Education Work Group has been working to place Youth Education Coordinators in each chapter and council as a way to get more kids involved in outdoor education activities.

The Mining Work Group is authoring a handbook to assist chapters and councils who are forced to deal with extraction activities in

their home areas. Each work group goes about its business in a way that they feel will work best for that particular group.

The second area of responsibility for the NLC involves serving as a liaison between National TU staff and chapters and councils. Because the NLC has a representative from each council, areas of concern can be communicated from National TU to state councils or from state councils to National TU.

A good communication example would be the Youth Education Work Group helping National staff spread the word about an effort that is underway to help fund National's Education Program. The Guadalupe River chapter in Texas has made a pool of money available as matching funds to help raise money for such efforts as the TU Teen Summit summer camp. The Youth Education Work Group has been involved in communicating information about that effort to the states.

A second example of communication took place in October when the Mining Work Group spread information about the proposed Bristol Bay Mine from Alaska staff to chapters and councils around the country.

The term of an NLC member is limited to five years. I have about a year remaining on my time with the NLC. In Wisconsin it has often been the case that past State Council chairs have filled the NLC position. That has worked well because past chairs are very familiar with both their state's and National TU's organizations.

If you have additional questions about the NLC, contact me at [kjmccarthy75@gmail.com](mailto:kjmccarthy75@gmail.com).

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You do not have to be present to win the canoe raffle.

\*paddles are not included

**Northwoods Trout Unlimited 42<sup>nd</sup> Conservation Banquet  
Quality Inn (668 West Kemp Street, Rhinelander)**

**April 28, 2018 | 5:00 – 9:00 PM**

For tickets or more information contact Terry Cummings (see above) prior to April 21st. No tickets purchase at the door. Discount hotel rooms available.



# Update on TU's Great Lakes Restoration Program



## UPSTREAM ON SPENCER CREEK PRIOR TO RECONNECTION

Prior to the replacement of the culvert there was an average silt depth of 13 inches with a maximum of 17 inches due to impounding. Increased velocities revealed sand, gravel and cobble after the restoration.

Words and photos by Laura MacFarland, TU Great Lakes Restoration Manager

In 2017, Trout Unlimited staff and volunteers helped to reconnect 42 miles of coldwater habitat within the Peshtigo River watershed in Northern Wisconsin.

In collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service and the Wisconsin DNR, 10 inadequate culverts were replaced with fish-friendly structures. An additional road crossing located on private industrial forest was abandoned. In all, the projects eliminated 11 aquatic organism passage barriers and improved instream habitat.

Thanks to a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and ongoing support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), we will be continuing our efforts here in northern Wisconsin through 2019. Our objective for 2018 is to reconnect an additional 25 miles within the Peshtigo system through the replacement of five more culverts.

In addition to our culvert work, we are very excited to be a part of the North Branch Oconto Restoration Partnership. In 2018, we will be assisting to restore 2.6 miles of wild brook trout habitat through the

heart of Wabeno. This will entail the removal of mill dams, a culvert replacement and instream habitat improvements.

I am eternally grateful to the Wisconsin Council and chapters for their ongoing support of the program. Thanks to your generous financial contributions and letters of support, we have been able to leverage the necessary grants. Thank you!

## Project spotlight: Spencer Creek

Spencer Creek is a very important coldwater tributary to the Rat River. The limited trout population of the Rat River, a larger tributary to the Peshtigo River, depends on cool-cold water tributaries such as Spencer Creek. It is likely that Rat River trout historically used Spencer Creek for spawning, nursery and rearing habitat and also as a refuge from warm water temperatures that routinely occur in the Rat River.

However, in recent decades trout within the Rat River have been unable to access Spencer Creek due to a culvert that, like a water cannon, blasted water at high speeds from above the water's surface.

Tom Moris, a local biologist at the U.S.F.S. had long recognized this culvert as a priority for replace-



## UPSTREAM ON SPENCER CREEK AFTER RECONNECTION

ment. Opening up the entire Spencer Creek system to trout migrations and movements would once again allow the seasonal and life history movements of trout and other species.

In 2017 the Wild Rivers Chapter and TU National collaborated to secure a \$50,000 Wisconsin DNR River Management grant, which helped fund the replacement of a culvert located on Spencer Creek in the Forest County Town of Blackwell. The project was completed in September 2017 in partnership with the U.S.F.S. and the Town of Blackwell, with additional funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

## Entire Spencer Creek system reconnected

Removal of this barrier reconnected the entire Spencer Creek coldwater system to trout and other aquatic organisms, including five miles of the mainstem Spencer Creek and an additional 1.56 miles of Swan Creek.

While fish passage was the primary objective at this site, we saw a great improvement in the instream habitat upstream and downstream of the site. By replacing the undersized and perched culvert, we eliminated the former impounding condition upstream of the road and restored natural river velocities and flow characteristics.

The replacement was implemented per the design and specifications developed by TU's stream restoration specialist. The former four-foot, round, corrugated metal pipe was replaced with a 31.5-foot aluminum box culvert with a 14-foot span and a rise of more than six feet.

The elevation of the culvert was lowered below the existing channel bottom and a two-inch toe wall was placed to prevent scour.

## Amazingly quick results

Preliminary post-construction monitoring was conducted in October to document immediate changes in current velocity, water depth, silt depth and substrate type following the project.

Upstream of the culvert, we observed a dramatic reduction in the amount of silt, revealing sand, gravel and cobble; virtually no silt was observed within the channel. The average silt depth was reduced from 10 inches to 0.004 inches. The average width and depth of the channel were both reduced to natural conditions mimicking the upstream and down-stream reference reaches.

Prior to the restoration, the velocity of water at the outlet of the culvert served as a barrier to aquatic organisms flowing at a rate of 1.61 meters/second (5.28 feet/second). Following the replacement, the velocity at the outlet of the culvert was .2 meters/second (.65 feet/second) which is more consistent with the velocities found upstream and downstream of the crossing allowing fish to move through the structure easily.

Special thanks to Bob Rice and the Wild Rivers Chapter for helping to secure the necessary funds for this project and to our partners at the DNR and U.S.F.S. For more examples of our projects, please like and follow "Trout Unlimited - Great Lakes Restoration" on Facebook. Here you will find additional photos, project updates and how you can get involved on the ground.



## DOWNSTREAM PRIOR TO RECONNECTION

Prior to the restoration, the velocity of water at the outlet of the culvert served as a barrier to aquatic organisms flowing at a rate of 1.61 meters/second (5.28 feet/second). Following the replacement, the velocity at the outlet of the culvert was .2 meters/second (.65 feet/second) which is more consistent with the velocities found upstream and downstream of the crossing, allowing fish to move through the structure easily.



## DOWNSTREAM AFTER RECONNECTION

The former four-foot, round, corrugated metal pipe was replaced with a 31.5-foot aluminum box culvert with a 14-foot span and a rise of more than six feet. The elevation of the culvert was lowered below the existing channel bottom and a two-inch toe wall was placed to prevent scour.

# Highlights of the 2017 Wild Trout Symposium

Words and photos by Matthew Mitro, Wisconsin DNR

The Wild Trout Symposium, held every three years in the heart of western wild trout country, is perhaps the best conference to learn about what's new in the science and management of wild trout. About 150 fisheries scientists, managers, conservationists and anglers from across the United States, Canada and Europe gathered in West Yellowstone, Montana for four days in September. This year's theme was "Science, Politics and Wild Trout Management: Who's Driving and Where Are We Going?"

## Wisconsin well represented

- Dave Vetrano, retired Wisconsin DNR fisheries manager, gave a plenary presentation on "Searching for sustainability: A legacy of land use, managed grazing and wild trout in southwestern Wisconsin."
- Duke Welter, TUDARE, presented on the economic impact of trout angling in the Driftless Area.
- Kent Johnson, Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter of TU, presented an evaluation of stream restoration benefits using Pine Creek as a case study.
- Joanna Griffin, Wisconsin DNR trout coordinator, presented a poster on using new brook trout genetics research to improve Wisconsin's trout stocking program and to protect wild brook trout populations.
- Justin Haglund, Wisconsin DNR fisheries biologist, presented a poster on age validation of brown trout in Driftless Area streams using otoliths.
- I presented on parasites and the health of wild trout, addressing the question, should we be concerned about gill lice infecting

brook trout? (I'll answer that question later in this article.)

I was very excited to recruit Dave Vetrano as a plenary speaker. Dave, in his 33-year career at the DNR, oversaw a remarkable recovery in coldwater stream habitat and trout fisheries in the Driftless Area and has a great story to tell about it. It was very well received.

Overgrazing has been detrimental to many western trout rivers, but when managed properly along Midwestern streams, it has been a highly beneficial use of agricultural land that has helped improve streams and their trout fisheries.

With presentations like Dave's on our successes in trout conservation, and Duke's update on the economic benefits of our improved Driftless Area fisheries, trout enthusiasts from other parts of the country are starting to pay more attention to the trout fishing opportunities we have here in Wisconsin.

## Johnson provided a view from the chapter level

Kent Johnson's presentation on Pine Creek, speaking from the TU chapter level, provided a welcome complement to the great work done at the national level. The Pine Creek restoration was successful in many ways, by reducing erosion potential and decreasing stream temperature.

But there were also unanticipated outcomes: no improvement in aquatic insect metrics and an increase in brown trout to the detriment of brook trout. These stories about local projects are important to tell, and I hope we see more presentations like Kent's at future international symposia.

## Disease, parasites and trout

I presented in a session on dis-



## WISCONSIN'S DAVE VETRANO DISCUSSED MANAGED GRAZING

Overgrazing has been detrimental to many western trout rivers, but when managed properly along Midwestern streams, it has been a highly beneficial use of agricultural land that has helped improve streams and their trout fisheries.

ease, parasites and the health of wild trout. Jacob Rash of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission began the session with an account of three parasites recently discovered in North Carolina: gill lice *Salmincola edwardsii* infecting brook trout and *S. californiensis* infecting rainbow trout, and *Myxobolus cerebralis*, the causative agent of whirling disease.

I followed with the latest on gill lice research from here in Wisconsin, which shows concern is warranted in heavily-infested populations in which young-of-year brook trout become infected. Fortunately, our state-wide surveys show such heavy infestations of young-of-year brook trout to be uncommon, but more research is needed on long-term gill lice-brook trout dynamics to better understand the genesis and duration of heavy outbreaks.

The next presentation was by Toby Landeryou, a Ph.D. student at Middlesex University in London. He is doing research on brown trout genetic variation in the major histocompatibility complex, a part of the immune system that recognizes parasites infecting the host, and their ability to adapt in response to infection.

An interesting thing I learned from Toby in a conversation after his talk was the development of a laser-wielding robot used to kill sea lice on Atlantic salmon being raised in aquaculture pens in Scotland. Yes, there are online videos of lasers shooting fish (you must see them!); no, I don't think they will work in our trout streams!

The final presentations in the fish health session were by Luciano Chiaramonte of the Idaho Department of Fish & Game and Curtis Roth of the University of Idaho on the effects of air exposure on Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

There has been concern, originally based on a Canadian study, that prolonged air exposure of angler-caught trout (say 30 to 60 seconds) may lead to increases in mortality or decreases in reproductive success following release.

The Idaho studies on air exposure did not find any effects on trout survival for trout caught by angling and exposed to air for 0, 30, or 60 seconds prior to release. And a study of angler behavior in Idaho showed that average air exposure

duration was about 20 seconds. These studies indicate that regulations on air exposure time in catch-and-release fisheries are not warranted.

## Method for eradicating non-native trout

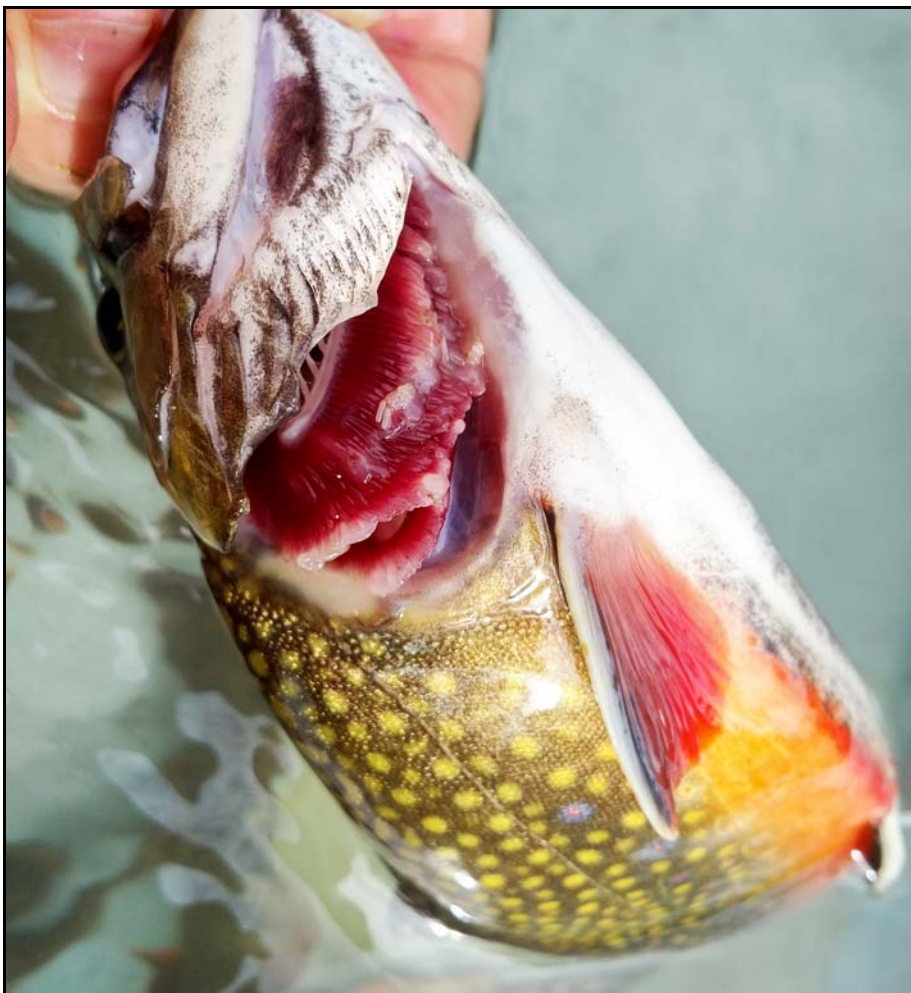
Perhaps the most innovative and potentially groundbreaking research, presented by Patrick Kennedy of Idaho F&G, was on the use of YY male brook trout for eradicating non-native brook trout where they threaten native cutthroat trout. A team led by Dan Schill from Idaho F&G developed hatchery-produced male brook trout that have two Y chromosomes. When released into an undesired population and allowed to reproduce, over time the sex ratio skews to 100 percent male, leading to extirpation.

The process can be aided by mechanical removal of the target species prior to the release of the YY males. Mechanical removal suppresses population abundance but typically cannot eliminate the population. Modeling studies and initial field trials so far support the use of YY males as a viable approach to eradicating undesirable fish populations.

## Next Symposium in 2020

The Wild Trout Symposium will reconvene again in September, 2020. Visit [wildtroutsymposium.com](http://wildtroutsymposium.com) to read more from the many presenters at the 2017 symposium.

*Matthew Mitro is a fisheries research scientist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Based in Madison, Matt has been working with the DNR on statewide fisheries issues since 2003. Matt's work focuses on trout in Wisconsin's inland streams, including stream habitat restoration, trout stocking and propagation issues, angling regulations, fish ageing, population modeling, parasites and environmental change. Matt previously worked as a population ecologist with the EPA, as a stock assessment biologist with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and did his doctoral work on rainbow trout in the Henrys Fork, Idaho. Matt graduated from Montana State University (PhD, MS), University of Vermont (MS), and Colgate University (BA).*



## DNR'S MATT MITRO DISCUSSED GILL LICE AT SYMPOSIUM

Although researchers have found some heavily-infested populations in which young-of-year brook trout become infected, state-wide surveys show such heavy infestations of young-of-year brook trout to be uncommon. More research is needed on long-term gill lice-brook trout dynamics to better understand the genesis and duration of heavy outbreaks.

# TU CARES update

By Tom Lager

Trout Unlimited - Central Area Restoration Effort for Sustainability, initiated in 2016, continues to achieve its goals. The inaugural project on the West Branch of the White River (WBWR), to assess and implement improvements to the WBWR representing the possibilities achievable across the Central Region streams, had a great 2017 field season.

Through the collaborative efforts of the TU CARES Core Team working with multiple TU Chapters, DNR Habitat Crew, DNR Fisheries electro-shocking team, DNR Environmental Analysis personnel and Water Action Volunteers (WAV) the biological and physical features of the WBWR watershed were documented and assessed.

Six sampling sites along the 8.7 miles of stream were established for monitoring and several additional sites were investigated due to their unique features, including an unnamed tributary, riffle run sections and road crossings. WAV monitoring data verified the WBWR's character as a high-quality trout stream; the macroinvertebrate survey supported this contention and provided data for development of a hatch chart to guide fishing excursions.

A review of trout surveys revealed healthy populations of brook and brown trout; however, the rainbow trout numbers are declining. No stocking is occurring in this stream. Investigation of an unnamed tributary that contributes substantial cold water flow from the northern section of the watershed documented well established populations of brook and brown trout. Several roads cross the tributary; one consists of a perched culvert that obstructs up-stream trout migration, essentially dissecting the trout populations during most stream flow regimes.

A total of nine stream crossings in the watershed were evaluated for potential obstruction. Trout habitat improvement work was conducted

in the recently acquired section near County Highway Y and further up in the watershed, extensive fishability clearing was completed.

Evaluation of the 2017 field season's work and collected data led to a series of next steps for the WBWR. WAV data reviewed by Mike San Dretto and Nate Ratliff will help define the 2018 monitoring program and will potentially include level two monitoring.

John Tucker engaged DNR Fisheries staff, while Ray White initiating next steps to understand the causes of rainbow trout population decline and plan for corrective measures to assure a self-sustaining fishable population.

The plan for old habitat structure repair is on-going with Shawn Sullivan's DNR Habitat Crew. The stream crossing assessments completed by Dennis Draskowski, Al Johnson, John Tucker and I were transferred to Bobbi Jo Fisher for prioritization modeling and plan development for removal of obstructions to trout migration.

Continuation of the WBWR project across the Central Region requires additional resources and involvement of stakeholders, so publicity and fundraising efforts are underway for 2018. Laura Tucker has been generating ideas for publicity. TU CARES presentations, booths and literature are being developed and will be presented at regional conferences, TU events and other forums. Al Johnson is completing grant writing training and will lead our fundraising effort.

TU CARES is reaching out to all who have an interest in this undertaking, and we welcome your involvement.

*Tom Lager has supported TU for 29 years in a range of positions; currently as State Council Secretary, Vice Chair of the TU's Central Region and Fox Valley TU Board of Directors. The TU CARES project arose from leading a collaborate effort among Central Region TU Chapters and DNR within the region.*



Tom Lager

### TU CARES EFFORTS ON THE WEST BRANCH OF THE WHITE RIVER

(Above) Al Johnson, Mike San Dretto, Dennis Draskowski and John Tucker assessing stream obstruction.

(Below) Nate Ratliff water monitoring on the West Branch of the White River. Six sampling sites were established for monitoring.



Tom Lager

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# Fighting ugly with beauty

*At the Convergence event displays, art, literature, photography, conservation and more.*

## **“At the Convergence”**

They come here  
From as far away  
As Colorado,  
From as near  
As Minnesota;  
Drawn by a shared  
Willingness  
To celebrate their art,  
Affirming a truth:  
A love of Beauty  
Unites us all.

*By Dan Holland, 2017*

By Dan Holland

When John Meachen and I hatched “At the Convergence,” it was borne out of a shared sense of outrage about our state’s and nation’s intolerable environmental policies.

The galvanizing moment occurred when I asked John: “And what are we going to do about it?” The startled look on John’s face caused me to quickly respond with legendary anthropologist Margaret Mead’s immortal words: “Never doubt that a few thoughtful, concerned people can change the world. Indeed, that is the only thing that ever has.” At that moment we both committed ourselves to do whatever we could to be a positive force for good in a world much in need of good.

That led to our approaching Curator of Education Catie Anderson at the award-winning Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum. When we discussed our intent to “fight ugly with beauty,” she startled us both by saying, “Your idea would fit perfectly with Birds in Art, and we are in the planning stages of that now.”

John and I stared at each other, before chorusing, “This year?”

Catie simply responded, “Yes.”

So that is how some of the luminaries of writing, visual art and environmental science came together in Wausau in early October to celebrate the thing that unites us all — a love of beauty.

Admittedly, it got a little scary. We asked ourselves, “Where do we go from here.” Because of our friendship with celebrated artist Bob White, we asked him what he thought. His reply was, “I’m in.” He paused an instant, then added, “I’ll get Gierach and Dvorak.” Then we were able, again with Catie’s help, to add eminent environmental scientists Alan Haney and Eric Anderson to the distinguished individuals who made the event such a success. Who could have foreseen the evolution of a wild idea into the celebration that became “At the Convergence?”

In the aftermath of the event, sponsored jointly by Wisconsin Trout Unlimited and the museum, a host of memorable images remain: Bob White creating a masterpiece of Alaskan landscape before the adoring eyes of numerous onlookers, the gallery tour of Birds in Art identifying and talking about imperiled species of birds around the world...ending with John Gierach’s capstone comment, “Our environmental policy is wrong, it just is.”



### **CONVERGENCE DISCUSSIONS MIX ART AND CONSERVATION**

As the crowd followed them through galleries showcasing the world’s best wildlife art, Alan Haney discussed environmental issues related to the various species. John Gierach (left) sprinkled in some of his thoughtful thoughts.



### **MASTERPIECE CREATED BEFORE THEIR EYES...INCLUDING INSTRUCTIONS**

In a cozy room filled to capacity with adoring onlookers and wanna-be artists, Bob White created a masterpiece of Alaskan landscape before their eyes. And he patiently and humorously explained every step, and answered all questions.

## **Fiction: Fishing tales from the desk of Benbow Cheseman**

### **The Thurlow Chronicles: SKEEZIX AND THE CATFISH RIG**

We have briefly been introduced to the fact of Thurlow and Maybelle’s little boy, Skeezix, but to date have not encountered the critter himself nor his nemesis, the family cat, Moloch.

When Skeezix was going on three, Maybelle found a tiny black tomcat kitten on the back porch. Naturally, she took it in, and, naturally, Maybelle decided that kitty would be the perfect pet for Skeezix. Finagle’s Corollary to Murphy’s Law, also known as The Law of Dynamic Perversity, ruled otherwise. When introduced and about to be petted/grabbed [the recollections differ] the kitten hissed and swiped Skeezix across the back of his hand with his claws, drawing blood and a piercing howl from the boy.

Thus was born a deep and abiding relationship firmly rooted in mutual hatred. Maybelle, unwilling to chuck the kitten out, but also insisting over Skeezix’ protests that he’d tried to grab the cat by the neck, had her revenge on both by naming the cat after the ancient Canaanite idol known as “devourer of children.” Child sacrifice was part of the Molochian liturgy. Eight years pass, and cat and child each survive the other, due, primarily, to each one’s respect for the other’s potential lethality. “Mutually Assured Destruction” kept the peace, until, that is, the event that herein unfolds.

Skeezix was sometimes invited to fish with us, and paid for the privilege by coming with us

on Saturday mornings to Elmer’s Hair Emporium, reading the outdoor sports magazines while his dad indulged his second-favorite hobby besides fishing: watching haircuts.

He was usually quiet and as patient as a kid his age could be, but on one day, while reading a “Bass Masters” issue, he became very excited and asked Elmer if he could borrow the magazine to take home to read. Elmer agreed, and Skeezix actually excused himself from fishing in order to go home and read! We should have heard the warning bells, but we didn’t: Dynamic Perversity again.

Instead of taking the boat out, due to a storm brewing, Thurlow and I rigged six-weight flyrods and fished from shore, starting and finishing about a half-mile south of the docks. Coming home past Elmer’s towards my house for supper, we met Elmer outside the Emporium, very agitated. “Thurlow”, he said, “you’d better get yourself back down to the dock. Skeezix came by here about five minutes ago, and he had that cat of yours in a cage with leather straps all over him, and a heavy bait-casting rig over his shoulder. I first thought there was a bagpipe band coming down the street!”

We hopped in my car, which was still parked in Elmer’s lot, and raced to the dock. Sure enough, there was Skeezix, struggling with a very angry tomcat that was encased in a leather

harness with a huge steel hook riding point-up on the cat’s back. The hook was near the terminal end of some very heavy braided line, which itself was threaded through the rod guides to Thurlow’s large bait-casting reel. Fortunately, the cat’s struggles had made it impossible for Skeezix to complete the rig by attaching hook to line. While I freed Moloch (who, strangely, had always seemed to like and trust me), Thurlow interrogated Skeezix about whathehellwas-going-on.

The trembling waif explained that the magazine had an article about using live frogs held in a harness for largemouth bass, and figured that as they were called “catfish,” the huge shovel-heads that lived in the river would consider a 12-pound feline just the thing for dinner. He’d spent the day rigging a harness from belts he’d bought at Goodwill, and capturing Moloch in Thurlow’s landing net and hitching him to the harness.

Hizzoner, the outraged father, did not consider relevant the fact that an 11-year-old kid was not likely to be able to lift and cast a 12-pound cat off the dock and into the water with a bait-casting rod. The principle of the thing resulted in Skeezix getting his backside walloped. (Political correctness had no place in that household.) Moloch survived, and the armed truce resumed. To this day, Skeezix will not eat catfish.

# Isolated wetlands

What are they and why are they so important...especially to trout streams.



Kate Redmond

## CEDARBURG BOG, ISOLATED WETLANDS

In Wisconsin, diverse wetland types that can be “isolated” include prairie potholes, ridge and swale wetlands, ephemeral ponds, and more. They make up 20 percent of the wetlands in Wisconsin, and are some of the most important features on our landscape for clean water and flood control.

By Erin O'Brien,  
Wisconsin Wetlands Association

### What are “isolated” wetlands and why are they important?

“Geographically isolated wetlands” are wetlands with no direct or permanent surface water connection to navigable lakes or rivers. “Non-federal wetlands” is another common label, since the federal government no longer protects these wetlands. Whatever you call them, these wetlands make up 20 percent, or approximately one million acres, of Wisconsin’s remaining wetlands.

Nature creates wetlands to handle water. Sometimes this is in obvious places like along the banks of rivers, where rivers come together or where rivers empty into larger water bodies.

But wetlands also form in more subtle places, like where the land is flat and water runs off the surface very slowly, in shallow depressions where rain and snowmelt pond or where groundwater bubbles up from a seep or spring.

Often isolated wetlands are small in size or are only wet for short periods of time, usually in the spring and summer. Because of their small size and short-term nature, these wetlands can be overlooked on the landscape.

In Wisconsin, wetland types that can be “isolated” include ephemeral ponds, kettle bogs, rare types of fens, prairie potholes, ridge and swale wetlands and more. All of these isolated wetlands are very important for water quality, flood storage, wildlife habitat and more.

### Are “isolated” wetlands really isolated?

Isolated wetlands may not have an obvious surface water connection to our lakes and rivers, but in many ways all of our waters are connected, including these wetlands.

Small and isolated wetlands often connect to groundwater in important ways. Groundwater can be a water source for isolated wetlands via upwelling at springs and seeps. In turn, snowmelt and seasonal rain stored in isolated wetlands can slowly infiltrate down

into the ground, recharging groundwater. They connect with downstream communities by controlling water quantity and protecting water quality, and they connect with other wetlands and uplands through the movements of wildlife (for example, salamanders moving from breeding habitat to uplands, or birds flying from wetland to wetland).

### Why do we protect “isolated” wetlands?

Wetlands, even the small and seemingly isolated ones, are some of the most important features on our landscape when it comes to providing flood protection and clean water for communities.

Small and isolated wetlands protect against flooding by absorbing and storing snowmelt and sea-



Eric Epstein

## MANY ISOLATED WETLANDS IN WISCONSIN'S GLACIAL LANDSCAPE

This dramatic glacial landscape northeast of Bloomer contains a segment of the Chippewa Moraine that includes many “isolated” wetlands. The glaciers left behind depressions and ridges that are now a mosaic of habitats including lakes, ponds, and wetlands of many kinds. Many of these wetlands have no connection to surface water, and therefore are “isolated” wetlands.

sonal rain. These wetlands also help improve water quality. By slowing the flow of water, they allow sediments to settle to the wetland floor instead of traveling into our lakes and rivers.

Isolated wetlands provide critical and abundant wildlife habitat. Waterfowl depend on these wetlands for breeding, amphibians prefer these fishless waters, and trout rely on them to supply cold summer stream flow.

Without these small and isolated wetlands, fish and wildlife would lose critical habitat. Less surface runoff, snowmelt and seasonal rainwater would be absorbed and stored. Larger, flashier floods in our streams and rivers would cause erosion, promote channel down-cutting, and increase sediment deposition. Protecting isolated wetlands maintains the

important natural benefits they provide.

Small, seemingly isolated wetlands are important individually, and are especially important when they work together as a team. The benefits provided by many isolated wetlands spread across the landscape, really add up. When it comes to isolated wetlands, the old adage rings true: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Next time you see a place on the landscape where water collects in the springtime, take a closer look. Not every puddle is a wetland, but even small, seemingly isolated wetlands are helping keep fish and wildlife healthy, ensuring that the water you drink is clean, and protecting your community from flood impacts.



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TIM LANDWEHR

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FEATURED SPEAKERS

TUCKER & JACQUIE NELSON

Tucker and Jacquie Nelson are husband/wife guides for **Nelson's Spring Creek Ranch** in Livingston, MT. Both share a deep passion for fishing that goes beyond the sport and is expressed in stewardship for the land. Both specialize in spring creek techniques but will also share their expertise while drifting the Yellowstone River.



FOR MORE INFORMATION: [SWTU.ORG](http://SWTU.ORG)

# Healthy trout streams need healthy wetlands

By Erin O'Brien,  
Wisconsin Wetlands Association

When a bill dropped this fall proposing to eliminate state protections for “isolated wetlands,” the reaction from Wisconsin’s sportsmen and conservation community was fast and stern.

Why? Because the proposal rendered at least one million acres of wetland habitat vulnerable to development.

As expected, organizations like Ducks Unlimited, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and Wisconsin Wetlands Association led the charge. These organizations all have wetland-conservation-focused missions, and the proposed roll-backs would cause great harm to the resources they work so hard to protect and restore. Other organizations followed suit.

To the surprise of some policy makers, the Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited also issued a strong statement opposing the bill.

“What do isolated wetlands have to do with trout habitat?” policy makers asked.

The answer: a lot!

The term “isolated wetlands” is a misnomer. It was created to describe a subset of wetlands that lack a direct or permanent surface water connection to a navigable lake or river. But these wetlands are physically and hydrologically connected to other waters, particularly trout streams, in two important ways.

### Springs and seeps feed headwater streams.

Springs and seeps develop where cold groundwater discharges to the

surface, creating wetlands and forming flow paths and small channels. These wetlands deliver a continuous supply of cold, clean water to small streams and downstream waters. In hot summer months, this helps maintain the base flow and low temperatures needed to support trout and other aquatic life.

### Ephemeral ponds “slow the flow”

Ephemeral ponds develop in depressions on the landscape. They receive water through overland flow following spring snow melt and seasonal rain events and often dry up by late summer/early fall. Ephemeral ponds tend to be small but regionally abundant, particularly in the upper portions or headwaters of our watersheds. Combined, they capture and store immense quantities of water. From there, two things can happen:

**Detention & infiltration** – Most ephemeral ponds have permeable soils. The water is stored temporarily, infiltrates, and slowly migrates downslope beneath the surface. This water discharges later in the season to other wetlands such as springs or seeps or directly to a stream. The ground acts like a refrigerator, discharging a cold source of base flow during the hot summer months.

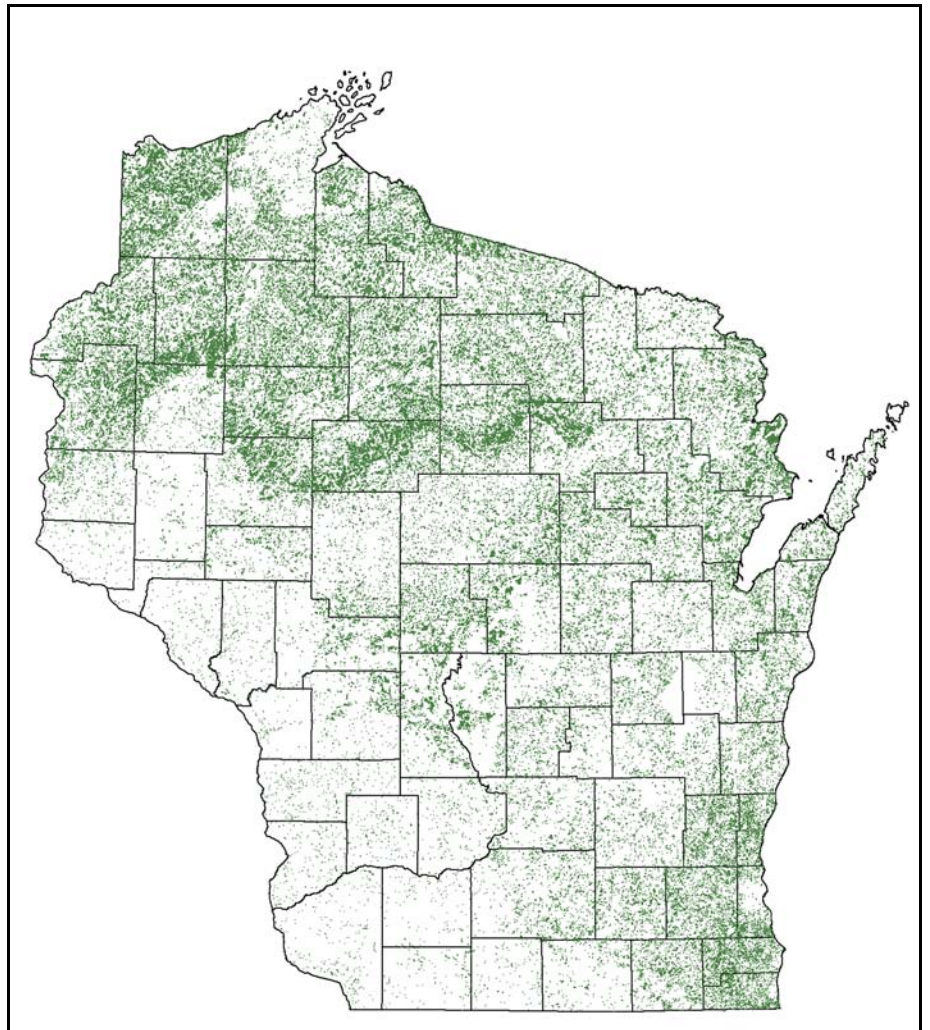
**Retention & evaporation** – In ponds with impervious soils such as clay, water is permanently retained until it is lost through evaporation.

In both cases, the storage provided slows the flow of runoff that would otherwise rush downstream, harming trout habitat. By reducing the erosive energy of storms, these wetlands help prevent bank scour-

ing and help keep sediments and nutrients out of our streams.

The majority of Wisconsin’s million acres of “isolated wetlands” are in the upper portions of our watersheds at or near the headwaters of

streams, and these wetlands are there for a reason. “Isolated” wetlands support the flows, temperature, bank stability and water quality of Wisconsin’s coldwater trout streams.



**1 MILLION ACRES OF WETLANDS NOW THREATENED**

“Isolated” wetlands, shown here in green, are found throughout Wisconsin, totaling at least one million acres.

## Fox Valley Trout Unlimited

### 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Cabin Fever Day... fishing expo

Open To Everyone Who Likes To Fish

Saturday, January 20, 2018

9 am-4 pm, The Grand Meridian, Appleton

\$10 at the door, spouses and under 18 free

Events include an Expert Speaker Program

### “Trout Fishing Adventures within a Day’s Drive”

10 am “Mouse-ing for Trout Under the Cover of Darkness”  
Mike Kuhr, Project Healing Waters

11 am “Nipigon River, Home of the World Record 14.8# Brook Trout”  
Ray Rivard, Red Rock, Ontario

1 pm “Wilderness Trout Fishing in the U.P.”  
Randy Berndt, U.P. Fly Angler

**And more!**  
Bucket raffles & silent auction, great quality items  
Raffle to win a handmade Scott Grady cane fly rod  
Fishing equipment exhibitors - fly tying materials  
Fishing guides - DNR booths  
HUGE used equipment sale  
Adult & youth fly tyers - Fly casting clinic



Lunch will be available  
Visit [foxvalleytu.org](http://foxvalleytu.org) for more information

## TU Leader Profile: Tom Schnadt

# Considerate, steady, supportive

Latecomer to TU has amazing impact on his chapter and his fellow members.

By Maria Manion

For a time in Kiap-TU-Wish chapter history, our membership seemed awash in Gregs, Bobs and Toms. If one was uncertain of a name, trying any of those three gave you a good shot at getting it right. But it also caused confusion. Which Greg? Which Bob? Which Tom? And if that was the question in regard to Tom Schnadt, the answer was always “the tall one.”

Height is an easy distinguisher for Tom Schnadt, the Kiap-TU-Wish chapter president, but it's certainly not the overriding one. What distinguishes Tom is his thoughtful, earnest approach to people and his knack for engaging volunteers. Tom recognizes the skills and interests of chapter members and actively supports them. The chapter's increasing involvement in youth education and membership outreach reflect the new and varied activities that have developed under his leadership.

### Exposed to the outdoors as a child

Originally from Illinois, Tom's path to Kiap-TU-Wish president began a long time ago with family camping trips and holidays spent with his grandmother, a naturalist in White Pines Forest State Park.

The family would load up their Nimrod tent trailer and head toward the Tetons and Yellowstone. On holidays they'd visit his grandmother who lived in the park. “I was pretty fortunate as a kid to have a state park to ram around in, particularly on Thanksgiving or Christmas when it was vacant.”

He recalled the story of a hairy, high-water crossing in her Chevrolet Corvair when the park was flooded in the spring. On a deep ford, the car turned and slid through at an angle. With total control, she delivered them on the opposite side, noting that the others would be much easier.

When a bit older, Tom's outdoor jaunts took him to places further from home. He made numerous wilderness trips to places north in Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, adventuresome journeys in the spirit of that high-water crossing with his grandmother. On one such expedition in his 40's, while lining a canoe around rapids on the Asheweig River in Ontario, he thought maybe this type of activity was out for him, that he had to step back from such taxing physical expeditions.

Thus began his transition into fly fishing and the new places closer to home that he would explore. “It was ironic, because a lot of those places that we had been – the Kazan in Nunavut, the Clearwater in Saskatchewan, and others – would have been phenomenal fly fishing, but I was a spincast fisherman at that point.”

He did, however, recall an “aha” moment when fishing for grayling with small Mepps spinners on the Clearwater. “I had a little fly box from L.L.Bean that I had when I was in middle school. I rigged up the spinning rod with the flies and a strike indicator, not a bobber, and immediately started to have ten times the success with the flies than the others had with the Mepps. It was kind of eye opening. ‘Oh, okay. This is why people do this.’”

His definitive step into fly fishing and the new rivers to which it would lead him happened when he took a fly-fishing class hosted by Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop, a local retailer. Tom learned how to tie knots and leaders, where to go, what equipment he needed and more. He hung out at the shop, learning things gradually. Tom got into fly fishing late, relatively, but it's been 20 years now. To the chapter's good fortune, 10 of those have been spent as a Kiap-TU-Wish volunteer and board member.

In his professional life, Tom worked in the building products industry—plywood and particle board and the like. He had studied forest research development at the University of Minnesota and began work in that industry after graduation and a short stint with the WD-NR. He spent 33 years in building products before retiring, and as he walked away from a role as sales manager, he walked into his role as chapter president.

“Somewhere in my first year as president, it dawned on me that what I was doing on the board was basically the same thing I did as a sales manager: setting up meetings, putting people in their best place and figuring out how to get things done. Looking back, I probably wasn't ready for retirement, so this was a good opportunity.”

As Tom's life in fishing was an evolution, so was his involvement in coldwater conservation. He began volunteering with TU by brushing along streambanks on project workdays. He enjoyed the work and the people and was soon asked to run for a board position. Since joining the board, he's acted as chair of the conservation banquet committee, worked on stream restoration projects, supported the chapter's fundraising efforts and more.

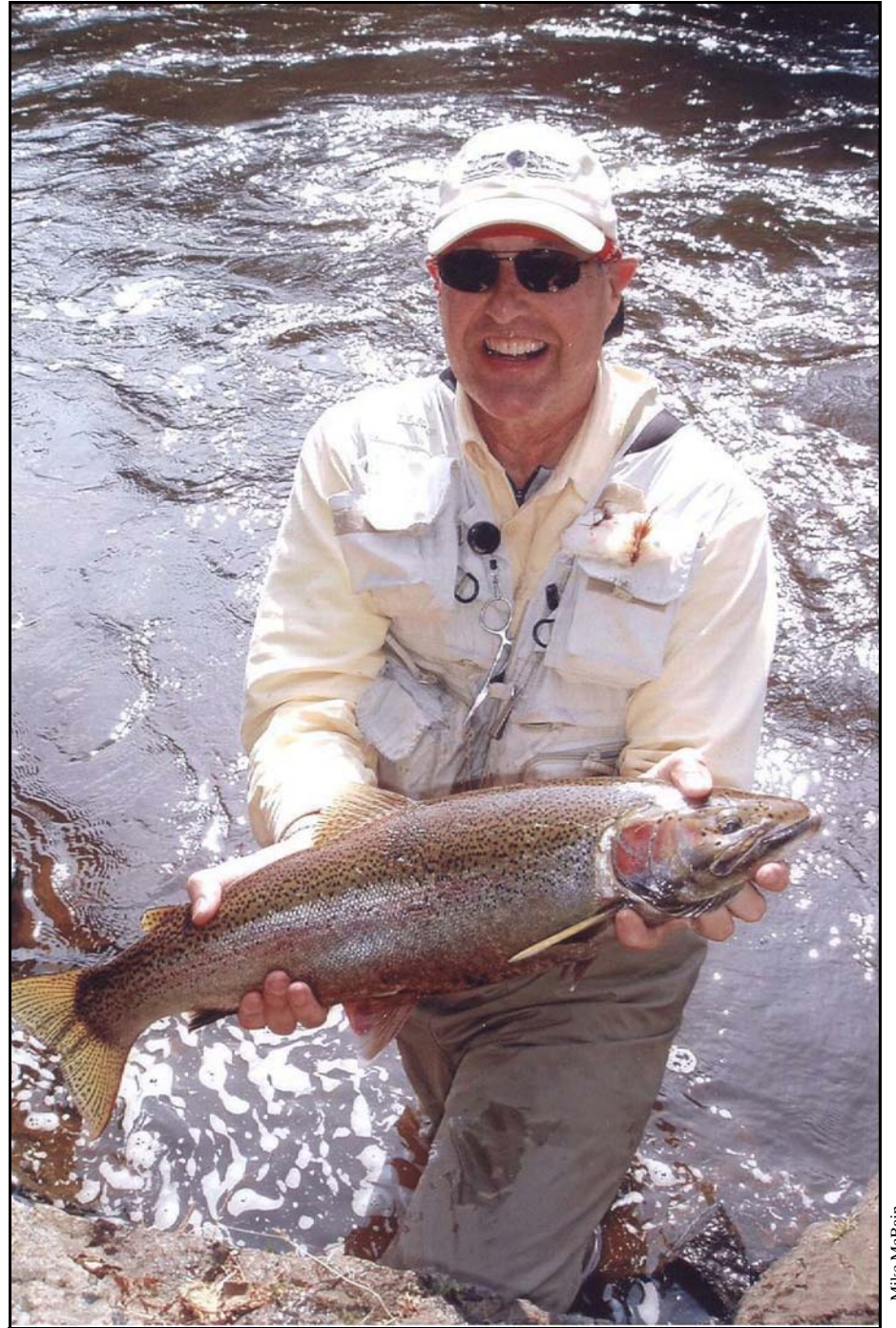
He thinks that perhaps his Achilles heel, when he started as president, was that he didn't have the historical knowledge and strong background about coldwater conservation that others had. But, he says that he's learned a lot and has enjoyed delving into the topic at a deeper level.

### A considerate, steady voice

As Kiap-TU-Wish president, Tom has been a considerate, steady voice, one that has fostered the interests of other volunteers. For the chapter, the results are new and renewed approaches to engaging the membership, such as Kiap-ON-Tap, a casual chapter meeting held at a local brewery; supplemental chapter meetings in Amery for members living in that area; and a return of the River Falls Fly Fishing Clinic, a longtime chapter event that introduced new people to fishing and conservation.

Results also include new opportunities for engaging youth. Kiap's Trout In the Classroom program began in 2015 with one classroom in North Hudson and has now grown to include four classrooms from North Hudson to River Falls. Teachers at other schools interested in starting programs of their own have contacted the chapter as well.

For two consecutive years chapter volunteers have provided fly-fishing instruction at the Pheasants Forever Game Fair event, and for



Mike McBurn

### A MINNESOTA BRULE RIVER TROPHY

Tom Schnadt began volunteering with TU by brushing along streambanks on project workdays. He enjoyed the work and the people and was soon asked to run for a board position. Since joining the board, he's acted as chair of the conservation banquet committee, worked on stream restoration projects, supported the chapter's fundraising efforts and more.

the past three years Kiap-TU-Wish has sponsored participants to the Wisconsin TU Youth Fishing Camp. In conjunction with volunteers from Minnesota Women's Fly Fishing, Kiap-TU-Wish volunteers developed the stream game Run-Riffle-Pool as part of a fly fishing event for Girl Scouts.

For all these successes and more, Tom is quick to credit the board members and volunteers who spearheaded the efforts. “I look at my role as trying to help people with whatever they want to accomplish.”

When asked what has been the most satisfying aspect of his tenure, Tom replied that the satisfaction comes whenever the chapter has an event that turns out well and meets expectations – no matter what the activity.

At the Pheasants Forever Game Fair, for example, chapter volunteers were taking the kids fishing for the afternoon. Tom was a bit nervous as the chapter had never done this before, but the volunteers were great. “The mentors went out and weren't anxious about it and made it happen and it was a good event.”

The Wisconsin TU Youth Camp participation is something Tom is particularly interested in. “We've had three kids participate and each

shows promise of being a future leader in TU. I'm kind of excited to see how that plays out.”

Tom is stepping down as Kiap-TU-Wish president this year, but not stepping away from the board or chapter activities. Kiap-TU-Wish is grateful for his time and efforts as president, and his enthusiastic support of the volunteers who work with him. He's left a lasting impression that shows us what can be accomplished by pooling together our collective interests and skills. The Kiap-TU-Wish board and membership thank Tom for his dedication to the chapter and look forward to seeing him streamside, either brushing on a project workday or netting brookies on the Trimble.

*Maria Manion is a Kiap-TU-Wish board member and editor of the chapter's newsletter, RipRap. She works for 292 Design Group, an architecture firm in Minneapolis, where she organized the first annual Ladies Trout Outing. Maria is originally from Minnesota's Iron Range and while she grew up amongst northern lakes and forests, she's come to love the trout-filled rivers of Wisconsin's Driftless region.*



# Final 2017 Update: Friends of Wisconsin Trout Unlimited

The 2017 fundraising campaign is nearing its end and once again the continued support for this program is wonderful. Through your generation donations, we have raised more than \$18,000. An enormous amount of in-stream work will be accomplished because of this. A huge thank you goes to the Southeast Wisconsin Chapter for its generous \$5,000 contribution to this fund.

I would like to highlight the Harry & Laura Nohr Chapter. This impressive chapter has had an annual goal to rehab nearly 8,000 feet a year at a cost of nearly \$175,000. The Friends program has been a source of funding for them over the years, and this is just one chapter in need of

your support. It's amazing to think that roughly 1.5 miles of stream was restored by a single chapter.

I hope you got out this year and enjoyed the bounty of our healthy, productive trout streams. All across the state, so many of these streams have directly benefited from the Friends of Wisconsin TU program. I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and holiday season.

Best of luck in the upcoming 2018 fishing season.

*Doug Brown, Chairman  
Friends of Wisconsin TU*



Friends grants support DNR LTE crews like this one with Doug Weber, Kyle Siebers, DJ Loken.

## Providing habitat improvement grants since 1991. The latest projects are...

\$2,000 to Wild Rivers for White River in Ashland County in 2015

\$2,000 to Wisconsin River Valley for Prairie River Project in Lincoln County in 2015

\$2,000 to the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter for the Upper Kinni in 2014

\$2,000 to Wis. Clearwaters Chapter for Waumandee Creek in 2015

\$2,000 to Harry & Laura Nohr Chapter for Pompey Pillar, 2016

\$2,000 to the Northwoods Chapter for habitat crews in 2015

\$2,000 to Marinette and \$1,500 to Wolf River for NE Region work in 2015

\$2,000 to Green Bay Chapter for a habitat crew 2015

\$2,000 to SEWTU for Little Willow Creek in Richland County in 2016

### Here are our Friends of Wisconsin TU

- Jason Anderson Mukwonago WI
- Edwin Barnes Middleton WI
- Charles Barnhill Madison WI
- Jim Bayorgeon Appleton WI
- Jolene Berg Chippewa Falls WI
- John and Susan Bleimehl Verona WI
- Stephen Born Madison WI
- Allon Bostwick Port Washington WI
- Maxwell Burgert Neenah WI
- Rick Christopherson Norwalk WI
- Andrew Cook II Sister Bay WI
- Bruce Davidson Wauwatosa WI
- Mike Duren Mazomanie WI
- Ed Eggers Genoa WI
- Jim Fleisch Fox Point, WI
- Jerome Fox Two Rivers WI
- D. James Fruit Jr. Hartland WI
- Scott Geboy Fox Point WI
- Dan Geddes Appleton WI
- John Gribb Mount Horeb WI
- Gordon Grieshaber Mineral Point WI
- Dean Hagness MD Custer WI
- Ashton & Stephen Hawk Madison WI
- William Heart Ashland WI
- Brian Hegge Rhinelander WI
- Wally Heil De Pere WI
- Bob Hellyer Boulder Junction WI
- Walter Hellyer Egg Harbor WI
- Charles Hodulik Madison WI
- Jeff Jackson Oconto Falls WI
- Charles Jorgenson Oconomowoc WI
- John Kenealy III Waukesha WI
- Lane Kistler Milwaukee WI
- Ralph Klassy Phillips WI
- Mark Kraft Madison WI
- Barb and Joe Kruse LaCrosse WI
- Joseph Kubale Dane WI
- Thomas Lukas Manitowoc WI
- Thomas and Larissa Lyon Janesville WI
- Douglas MacFarland Dousman WI
- Brian Madsen Ellsworth WI
- Anna Magnin Marshfield WI
- Kevin Mahaney Middleton WI
- Kim McCarthy Green Bay WI
- Austin McGuan Green Bay WI

- David Menke Bristol WI
- Cris Meyer Middleton WI
- Steven Miller Sun Prairie WI
- Steve Musser Middleton WI
- Herb Oechler Wauwatosa WI
- Cheryl and Winston Ostrow De Pere WI
- Donald Persons Janesville WI
- Randall Rake Helena MT
- Ron Rellatz Merton WI
- Thomas Rogers Princeton WI
- Tom Ryan Whitefish Bay WI
- Michael San Dretto Neenah WI
- Lisa and Todd Scheel St. Germain WI
- Jeff and Mary Schmoeger Cot. Grove WI
- James Schommer Lodi WI
- James School Kaukauna WI
- Jim and Marie Seder New Berlin WI
- Robert Selk Madison WI
- John Shillinglaw Madison WI
- George Shinnors Antigo WI
- Brent Sittlow Hudson WI
- Michael Staggs Poynette WI
- Mike Stary New Richmond WI
- Gary Stoychoff Green Bay WI
- Rick Szymialis Waupaca WI
- Julie & Todd Templen Dubuque IA
- Donald Thompson Cumberland WI
- Chuck Urban Wauwatosa WI
- Dennis, Becky Vanden Bloomen E. Claire
- Eric Van Vugt Milwaukee WI
- Greg Vodak Stoughton WI

- Ken Voight Sugar Grove IL
- Don Wagner Gillett WI
- Denis Wandtke Ogdensburg WI
- Stephen Wilke Marinette WI
- Paul Williams Madison WI
- Dan Wisniewski Middleton WI
- Nancy and Roland Woodruff Oshkosh WI
- Norb Wozniak Stevens Point WI
- Robert Wyman Beaver Dam WI
- Frederic Young Roscoe IL

### TROUT UNLIMITED CHAPTERS

Kiap-TU-Wish TU Chapter

Antigo Chapter

SEWTU Chapter

In Memory of Mike Rands.  
Donation from Tom and Nan Siebert

Special Thanks to Todd Hanson for the donation from the sale of his books.

*Yes, I want to join the "Friends" of Wisconsin TU.  
Enclosed is my check, payable to Wisconsin Trout Unlimited.*

MAIL TO: Friends of Wisconsin TU  
% Doug Brown  
R4800 Timber Lane  
Ringle, WI 54471

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #



# Chapter News



## Aldo Leopold Chapter

Carl Wagner, an Eagle Scout candidate from Portage, recently completed a project on our Bear Creek improvement project area involving the redesign, reconstruction and relocation of the information kiosk, which is now located adjacent to the new widened shoulder parking area along State Highway 130.

The scouts also built an access stile where one of the walk-in access easements across the Fargen property abuts the highway, a short distance from the parking area.

While they were at it, the scouts also trimmed back a willow thicket located adjacent to the creek on the upper pasture of the Fargen property.

With financial support from the chapter, Carl planned, designed and carried out this work with the labor being supplied by his scout troop and adult volunteers. Scott Allen provided guidance on behalf of the chapter and attended the construction day.

In November Mike Stapleton attended an event at the Merrimac Conservation Club to speak to a group of young sportsmen and their

parents about TU and the work the chapter has done in the area. Our numerous workdays at nearby Manley Creek and the ongoing work of the Riverland Conservancy on the same property were highlighted, as well as the WITU Youth Summer Fishing Camp.

In November we received a request for financial support for a fundraising raffle planned by the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Fisheries Society at their annual conference being held in January. The chapter sent a \$50 donation to them in the interest of supporting sound science in fisheries management.

Plans are being made for the annual Free Beginner Fly Tying Class, which will be held in Baraboo this year. The class begins on Wednesday, January 31 and runs for five consecutive Wednesdays. Mike Stapleton can be contacted for details at [mikestapleton22@gmail.com](mailto:mikestapleton22@gmail.com).

The ALTU quarterly board meeting will be on Wednesday, January 10, 2018 at Suzy's Steakhouse in Portage.

—Mike Stapleton

## Antigo Chapter

Happy New Year to all from Antigo TU. The weather in Wisconsin now looks like winter.

We recently attended the WITU Northeast Region winter meeting. The area fish managers and representatives from the U.S. National Forest Service were also in attendance.

It was another great meeting and a job well done by the chapters in this region, as they continued support of our coldwater resources. The Antigo Chapter donated \$3,000 for fuel for the DNR dredge that will be in the Mayking Flowage again this summer. We donated \$4,000 for a two-man brushing crew in the Antigo area, \$500 for beaver control in the Bayfield area and \$500 to the N. Branch Oconto River Restoration.

We have applied for a \$2,000 grant from the Friends of Wisconsin TU program to help complete funding for the two-man brushing crew in Antigo.

In the middle of November we got the brook trout eggs from Silver Moon hatchery in Elton for our two Trout In the Classroom sites that we started in Antigo high school and Wittenberg-Birnamwood high school. Mike Werdo at AHS said that the eggs in his tank hatched in early December.

After the holidays we will start putting together our spring fundraising banquet, which will be held Saturday, March 24, 2018 at Northstar Banquet Center. We are also looking forward to attending the State Council banquet in February.

Late this fall our chapter placed \$300 worth of brook trout in Remington Lake, here in town, for the kids to fish for this winter.

Our chapter is again planning our annual Kids Fishing Day on Saturday, June 9, 2018 on the east side of the city park.

—Scott Henricks



## Eagle Scout Leads Project on Bear Creek

Portage Eagle Scout candidate Carl Wagner recently completed the reconstruction of the Bear Creek information kiosk (left) and construction of a new access stile (above) at a walk-in easement on the Fargen property.

## Blackhawk Chapter

For our September meeting, Darin Sakas, who has been successfully fly fishing Wisconsin tributaries to Lake Michigan for more than 20 years, using both single and double-handled rods, presented an enlightening program covering the use of spey and switch-rod tactics, in conjunction with contact and indicator nymphing. He showed us pictures of enormous lake-run brown trout, and provided techniques to find and

land them.

In October, we featured Rich Osthoff, well-known guide and fly-fishing author of several books, who came down from Mauston to instruct and encourage us about the use of light rods and short casts in the smaller streams of the Driftless Area in southwestern Wisconsin.

Both programs were well received.

—Dave Hinde

## Central Wisconsin Chapter

Mike SanDretto, CWTU's past president, was a hard act to follow. The chapter flourished under his leadership, and Mike has been a great mentor to me. He continues to be active with membership and behind-the-scene activities.

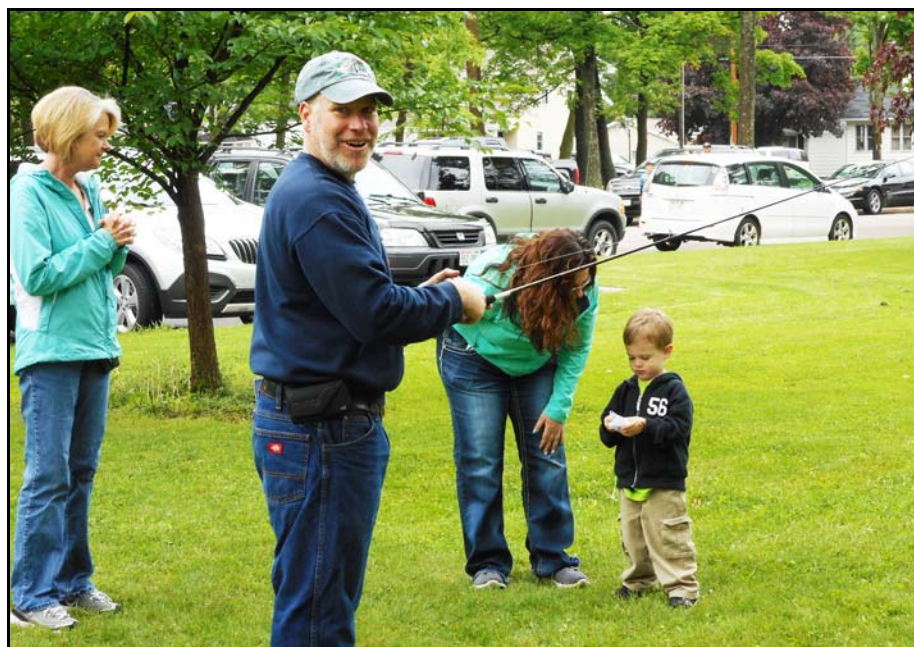
I am in awe at the dedication and many talents of our members and volunteers. The following is a review of the many activities that make our chapter successful. Many thanks to you all for your contributions.

Wayne Parmley and his wife will be managing our Facebook page in the near future. This will be a great upgrade, with more content, great stories and a new look.

Our *Brookie* newsletter has a great new look. Jeff Wegand has put a lot of effort into this, and it shows. Mark Allen has been instrumental in making the *Brookie* possible. A Thank you to all who've provided story ideas or have written articles when Jeff asks you. Many thanks also to Wayne Parmley for his assistance with the *Brookie*. He will be taking on the new role as editor of the *Brookie*, replacing Jeff. Thanks go out to Jeff for his great work.

A thank you to Bob Haase and Jeff Treu for their work on our website and with news agencies.

Our programs remain popular and well attended. They follow our



## Antigo Chapter's Annual Kids Fishing Day

Antigo member Carl helping with casting contest last June. The chapter is again planning its annual Kids Fishing Day on Saturday, June 9, 2018 on the east side of the city park.

# Chapter News



### CWTU WORK DAY ON THE PINE RIVER

All hands were busy at CWTU's September work day on the Pine River (right). When the work was done, the waders were cleaned of potential invasives (above). From left is Laura Tucker, Nate Ratliff and Mike San Dretto. Photos by Dennis Drazkowski.

business meetings on the second Tuesday of each month. Tried and true themes continue, but new ideas and opportunities are always considered. Jeff Treu coordinates great programs with the help of our members.

Dennis Drazkowski coordinated another great year with work on the West Branch White River, and multiple days on the Pine River. Thanks to all volunteers who made the work days successful, resulting in the best-kept secret for successful Central Wisconsin trout fishing. Thanks also to the Elliott Donnelley Chapter for their continued generous support and to the Fox Valley Chapter volunteers for their physical support.

Many Thanks to Dennis Drazkowski for his leadership and to Nate Ratliff for his photographs capturing the work done and the great fishing stories at lunch.

The River Keepers are keeping tabs on our local streams, surveying 37 stream/river locations with 25 teams made up of 70 volunteers. Bob Jozowski coordinates this very important work. Central Wisconsin Trout Unlimited has been actively involved in water monitoring since 2004, working in partnership with the DNR's Water Action Volunteers. The program has been in existence for 10 years with the support of the University of Wisconsin Extension and the DNR.

CWTU River Keepers are looking for volunteers who would like to join their Central Wisconsin River Keepers group. Volunteers do not have to be TU members. River Keepers are advocates for area streams. They monitor their streams once a month, and are watchdogs for invasive species and environmental problems. They are organized into small teams that are responsible for specific streams. A thank-you dinner was well attended in November 2017. Attendees received a River Keepers cap and dinner.

CWTU funds our projects with money we raise at the Annual Conservation Banquet. Other funding comes from grants, generous donations such as memorial fund donations. CWTU is grateful for the memorial donations. The generosity of others allows CWTU to be successful in our mission of stream restoration and education. These funds allow us to obtain matching grants

for our projects. We participate with other Central Region chapters to fund DNR LTE employees, which helps get more restoration and stream brushing done faster. The EDTU chapter from Chicago has been very helpful. Thank you all.

Scott Bahn is a master at grant writing and has obtained many grants to help fund our river restoration work. These have included grants from the Trout and Salmon Foundation, TU National's Embrace-a-Stream program and WITU's grant programs. We are blessed to have his dedication and expertise!

Much gratitude goes to our treasurer, Joe Peikert. His guidance and dedication keeps us on target.

Education is extremely important to CWTU as evidenced by our numerous successful programs. Troutfest is coordinated by Bob Smaglick, who has done a wonderful job of organizing this free public event. Jeff Treu is the educational chairman coordinating the monthly educational meetings at the Fin and Feather, Winneconne. Ray White presented a great lecture on the health of the Central Wisconsin rivers. Our Casting Clinic was held in June at Marble Park.

The Masters Fly Tying Series 2018 will be coordinated by Tom Meyer. Thanks to Dave Pables for his great work with last year's program. Beginning Fly Tying classes will again be offered, thanks to Dave Pables.

Dan Harmon has continued to orchestrate CWTU's successful 41st Annual Fly Fishing School. The school receives great reviews. All of our educational programs are very important to the chapter. They are commonly a source of new members who become active in chapter activities and work.

A number of CWTU summer gatherings occurred this year, including Fly Casting and Rigging at Marble Park and Picnic on the Pine, hosted by Laura & John Tucker and the CWTU BBQ Cookout hosted by Ira and Karen Giese and Peter. Many thanks to Karen and Ira Giese for sharing their home and their son with CWTU. Peter Giese put on a spectacular barbeque of roast chicken, pulled pork and beef brisket with all the fixin's. What fun!

Our 46th Annual Conservation Banquet was held in October in Oshkosh. Many thanks to our volun-



### KROPP RECEIVES CWTU'S RIVER KEEPER 2018 AWARD

Bob Jozowski presents Eric Kropp the River Keeper 2018 award during its 46th Annual Conservation Banquet in October.

teers for all their contributions. They make the chapter successful. Special thanks to the banquet committee for putting together this wonderful event. We want to thank those who have been around for most or all of the 46 years. Thanks also to all our sponsors and to Scott and Carolyn Grady for their continued support. 114 people attended. Jerry Strom entertained the attendees with great tunes on the baby grand piano provided by Heid Music of Appleton. Nancy Loehrke was the photographer for the event and

captured the fun. Shan Moran created the t-shirts, which were enjoyed.

CWTU has a lot of fun. Come join in. We need all types of skill and interests to keep things fresh. Communications, website, social media, the banquet, workdays. If you can spare a little time, please join us in any way you can. You will meet great people, have some fun and make a difference.  
—Laura Tucker

### Coulee Region Chapter

With the close of the Wisconsin trout season, there hasn't been any trout fishing action here on our side of the Mississippi River, but thankfully there is still plenty of in-season water in Iowa and Minnesota. My son and I had a great day on the stream in one of the Minnesota State Parks after Thanksgiving. We are also seeing a lot of Driftless Ar-

ea anglers chasing muskies on the fly. I still haven't hooked one, but am enjoying slinging some big flies tied by David Holmes and Norm Yackle.

We have had great attendance at our fall chapter meetings and have learned a ton from our presenters. Tom Starmack gave us plenty of insight on using a two-nymph system



## Chapter News

for fishing Driftless waters. John Noble and Bob Micheel were our presenters when we met in Sparta and they discussed all of the excellent fishing opportunities in Monroe County, especially at Fort McCoy.

Our November meeting in West Salem was a real treat as Dave Vetrano presented on the history of the wild trout stocking program. It is incredible to think that many of our area streams had very few trout in them just 40 years ago. Thanks to Dave, other DNR folks, TU chapters, and local rod and gun club groups, we are now truly living the golden age of trout fishing when you look at water quality and number of fish in the streams.

There are still plenty of debates about fish numbers and fish size in our waters, but we have water temps where they need to be in order to keep the stream inhabitants healthy.

Our December meeting was in Viroqua and we were fortunate to hear from Geri Meyer of the Driftless Angler fly shop. She's very knowledgeable about all things trout fishing and we learned about new gear, fishing techniques and all the work Geri is doing to bring more female anglers to the stream.

Trapfest is a get-together organized by our friend and member Trapper Voldahl, and this event gets going on January 6 at the Westby Rod and Gun Club. It's a fun and informal event to bring anglers to-

gether for the 2018 opener. Indoor camping is available at the club, but find all the necessary details in the Trapfest discussion thread at [www.driftlesstroutanglers.com](http://www.driftlesstroutanglers.com).

Jason Freund will be our presenter on January 17 at the West View Inn in West Salem. His topic is caddis flies and larva, definitely key food sources in our waters.

We have no chapter meeting/presentation in February, as we focus on our banquet on February 23. Tickets will be for sale soon on our Facebook page and website at [couleeregiontu.org](http://couleeregiontu.org).

Our March 21 meeting will be at the Legion in Viroqua, and we will hear from local DNR officers and prepare for the upcoming Conservation Congress spring hearings.

The 4th Cozad Driftless 1Fly contest is March 31, headquartered out of the Viroqua Legion. This event is a fun time, no matter if you are a participant, stream judge, volunteer, or just want to hang out at the awards ceremony and auction at the end of the day. The money that is raised is used for youth fishing activities. To find out more information, find the Cozad Driftless 1Fly page on Facebook.

There is a lot of good stuff going on with CRTU, so keep your eye on our Facebook page and website at [couleeregiontu.org](http://couleeregiontu.org) for more information.

—Curt Rees

### Fox Valley Chapter

Our October meeting was an excellent presentation by Shawn Sullivan from the DNR office in Wild Rose. Shawn's presentation dealt with the habitat work on the streams and rivers in the east-central portions of the state, including Waushara, Waupaca, Portage and Shawano counties.

His PowerPoint presentation included many slides highlighting the work during the last several years. TU chapters in these counties have contributed significant funding to help promote the Limited Term Employee program that Shawn directs each summer.

TU chapters have also contributed many hours of volunteer work on the streams and rivers in these counties.

Taylor Ridderbusch was one of the presenters at our November chapter meeting. Taylor works for National TU dealing with water issues in the Great Lakes region. The other presenter that evening was Bob Hasse from CWTU, who discussed fly tying. Our December chapter meeting was our annual Tie and Lie Night. Members and friends tied flies and told stories/fibs/lies about the past fishing season. There were two competitions, including

one to see who can tell the biggest/best lie and the other to see who could tie the most original fly.

Our chapter meetings for the months of September through December and the March meeting are held at the Capitol Centre on the north side of Appleton. Please check our website for specific dates and times of the meetings at [foxvalleytu.org](http://foxvalleytu.org).

We are also preparing for our annual Cabin Fever Day fundraiser January 20 at the Grand Meridian in Appleton, which will have many new and interesting presentations and vendors. The bucket raffle and silent auction items are some of the best offerings that we have ever assembled. This event provides an opportunity for our chapter to help fund the DNR LTE crews. Please check our website at [foxvalleytu.org](http://foxvalleytu.org) for additional information on Cabin Fever Day and our other activities.

Happy New Year. We'll see you on a trout stream in 2018.

—Rich Erickson

### Frank Hornberg Chapter

The Hornberg Chapter had a work evening in late September. We cut trees and cleared the channel of Stedman Creek where it discharges into the Tomorrow River south of Amherst. When the job was completed, Bob and Louise Juracka graciously invited the crew to their house nearby for a hot meal. They were assisted by Mary Duecker and Donna Mary Leterski. Background entertainment for the meal was provided by the delightful sounds of the rapids in the adjacent Tomorrow River.

We wish to thank chapter member Dan Holland for his assistance in bringing John Gierach, Bob White and Mike Dvorak together for their presentation on art and conservation at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau in October. It was a worthy addition to the WITU meeting in the museum on the same day.

Our chapter was working on the river again on a Thursday evening in October. Matt Salchert and Wyatt Bohm directed a crew of workers from the UW-Stevens Point Fly Fishing Club. They were successful in removing a large willow tree blocking the Tomorrow River at the former highway 10 wayside on Buchholz Road east of Amherst. En-

thusiasm was plentiful as the students dismembered the tree and removed the remains from the river.

In late October Stu Grimstad led a group of local citizens on an afternoon kayak tour of the Tomorrow River upstream from Amherst. The goal was to see how the repair work on the dam in Amherst in 2016 has affected that section of the river. In particular, they were looking to see the effect on water temperature and siltation in the former river channel. So far both effects appear to be positive for trout in the millpond.

Our annual holiday dinner was in early December at Shooters Supper Club in Plover. About 25 members, spouses, friends and family enjoyed food and pleasant conversation. Our thanks to Gene Schulfer for preparing his trademark holiday buffet.

We are coordinating activities with the fly fishing club at UW-SP. Our immediate goal is to offer some joint public activities in coming months, such as fly-tying workshops. Such connections are vital for the future of TU. Chapter member Heidi Oberstadt deserves credit for helping to establish and promote this relationship.

—John Vollrath

### Green Bay Chapter

Green Bay Trout Unlimited has been busy in the last quarter of 2017. Our first fall membership meeting in October featured Heidi Oberstadt, who talked about her western adventures and "Flyathlon" race in Colorado.

In November, Bob Haase joined the chapter for a fly-tying demonstration and also talked about his new book "Bob's Fly Tying Tips and Techniques." We held our annual holiday party and awards dinner in December with 50 members, friends and family in attendance. Lee Meyers and Adrian Meseberg received distinguished service awards for the time, money and talent given freely

to the chapter. Both held officer and board positions for many years with the chapter.

Dave Ostanek received the "Member of the Year" award. He currently is a member of the board of directors, education chair, youth education coordinator, organizes community and kids events with the chapter, and serves on the banquet committee. The Green Bay Chapter is also planning its annual fundraising banquet on February 15 at Stadium View in Green Bay. Tickets will be \$35 and all are welcome.

—Stausch Gruszynski

### Harry & Laura Nohr Chapter

We got a grant from TU National's Embrace-A-Stream (EAS) for this year's work on Borah Creek near Lancaster and the Blue River north of Montfort. We then participated in the EAS Challenge. We received more than \$1,500 in the challenge and \$100 of the challenge funds. Thank you to all those who donated.

Kurt Meyer helped the North Crawford School get the Trout In a Classroom program started.

We are also preparing for the Grant County Outdoor Skills Day and the State Council Banquet in February. These take place the same

weekend. The Skills Day is put on by the Grant County Sports Alliance, a group of representatives from the various sports groups in the county. Skills Day is presented for all interested people with a focus on youth. Almost everything is represented, from falconry to trapping. We will be doing fly casting and fly tying with about eight members. It takes place at the technical college in Fenimore.

We are also busy developing our chapter's CAFO policy.

—Brian Larson

### Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter

The Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter remains busy this winter. Volunteers are training for and working on stream habitat projects, hosting tours of completed projects, raising funds at our annual conservation banquet and monitoring the status of the dams on the Kinnickinnic River. We're also anxious to work with our region's new fisheries biologist.

DNR Fisheries Supervisor Heath

Benike announced that Kasey Seibert has been hired to fill Marty Engel's fish biologist position. Kasey has a degree from Southeast Missouri State University and a graduate degree from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. Her work history includes research on large-river fish populations in the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, as well as a stint in fisheries management for the Idaho Department of Fish and



Tom Lager

#### FOX VALLEY CHAPTER'S CABIN FEVER DAY COMING SOON

Fox Valley Trout Unlimited is preparing for the Cabin Fever Day fundraiser and is offering more \$10,000 in raffle and auction items at the January 20 event.

# Chapter News



Tom Schnadt

## PRACTICING AND LEARNING FIRST AID

Joe Knight from the Wisconsin Clearwaters Chapter and Sarah Sanford from the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter take part in a First Aid Training Course.

Game. Kasey starts this month.

The recently completed Trim-belle/Holst project has proven to be a good site for University of River Falls students to learn about stream and habitat restoration. Professor Kevin Juneau's Aquatic Restoration class toured the site in September and Eric Sanden's Foundations of Ecological Restoration class toured the site on October.

After Kiap-TU-Wish member Dan Wilcox wrote an article about the tours for the River Falls Journal, the Natural Resources Foundation (NRF) of Wisconsin contacted Kiap-TU-Wish about hosting a field trip. Chapter board member Perry Palin worked with the NRF to set up a Pierce County stream restoration tour this summer.

The DNR added a new requirement that chainsaw operators on brushing projects need both a chainsaw certification and first aid certificate.

Randy Arnold, the Kiap-TU-Wish volunteer coordinator, set up a first aid certification class with the help of the DNR's Nate Anderson. In October, 15 Kiap-TU-Wish and Clearwater members, and one student from UW-River Falls, attended a full-day class in Baldwin. Shannon Griebbe was the instructor and covered all aspects of first aid and CPR training.

Winter brushing is under way. Both the Kiap-TU-Wish and Clearwater chapters started work on Wilson Creek. Kiap-TU-Wish is waiting for final NRCS approval in anticipation of starting on next year's Trim-belle/Gutting project.

Kiap-TU-Wish held its annual conservation banquet in December at the Lake Elmo Inn Event Center and was a sellout, with 120 attendees.

The food and atmosphere were

## Northwoods Chapter

At our November meeting Bob Haase from CWTU gave a presentation on "Is It The Fly or Is It The Presentation?"

We had our annual Christmas Dinner at the Blue Heron restaurant in Eagle River on December 12.

Our next Conservation Banquet has been scheduled at the Quality Inn in Rhinelander on April 28. We will have a grand prize raffle for a beautiful cedar strip canoe donated by Laura and David

great, as was guest speaker Dean Hansen, who talked about insect life in a stream. Dean teaches the "Bugs in the Classroom" course, which has been a key component of Trout In the Classroom. Dean received the Silver Trout award for his efforts and commitment.

Thanks to the banquet committee of Deb Alwin, Mike Alwin, Scott Wagner, Allison Jacobs, Greg Dietl and Bob Diesch for organizing this important fundraiser. A big thanks to all of the Kiap folks who worked at the banquet, and to our generous membership for donating bucket raffle and silent auction items.

In December the Kinni Corridor Planning Committee began serious deliberations about the status of the dams on the Kinnickinnic River. Their final recommendation is due January 25. Chapter members Kent Johnson, Dan Wilcox and Gary Horvath are preparing a position paper for consideration by the Kiap-TU-Wish Board of Directors. This position paper will be presented to the Kinni Corridor Planning Committee before their January 25 deadline.

The River Falls City Council is tentatively scheduled to take up the issue at their regular meeting on February 13. The dates for public hearings on the dam are not known at this time. The public hearing(s) are critically important and the chapter will be working diligently to get people turned out for these hearings.

More details will be found in the January issue of RipRap and online on our website at [kiaptuwish.org](http://kiaptuwish.org), or our Facebook page. Sign up for our email alerts by contacting Randy Arnold at [randyca999@gmail.com](mailto:randyca999@gmail.com).

—Tom Schnadt, Gary Horvath, Maria Manion

MacFarland. The canoe was custom built at the Wooden Canoe Heritage Museum in Spooner. This cedar strip canoe is based on the Bob's Special Model of canoe built by the Chestnut Canoe Company of New Brunswick, Canada. It is 15 feet long and weighs about 45-50 pounds. Tickets for this great prize are now available. See the ad on page 9 of this issue of *Wisconsin Trout* for information on the raffle and banquet.

—Terry Cummings

## Oconto River Chapter

In mid-September our chapter hosted our annual special needs fishing day at Brunner's Pond in Underhill. We treated guests to a picnic lunch of burgers and hotdogs. About 50 people attended, including anglers, caregivers, volunteers and chapter members. Great weather made for an enjoyable day. The fish bit like crazy.

Cane poles were rigged up for those who didn't have their own equipment. Garden worms, corn and secret baits were used to fool the trout. The fishing went in streaks after a flurry of early activity. The fish that were caught were cleaned and sent home with the participants.

There are always some new faces at this event, alongside the veterans. They support one another and help each other, even cheering when someone catches a fish. It's a fun-filled and heartwarming event, with smiles all around.

The chapter kicked off its Trout In the Classroom project by delivering eyed eggs to the students at Suring, Oconto, Oconto Falls, Lena, Marion, Gillett, Pulaski, White Lake and Wabeno School Districts.

Keshena School was added to the list this year. Dale Halla is coordinating the effort. Eggs began to hatch in early December and will provide a wonderful project for the classes involved. Special thanks to Tim Winkle at Silver Moon Springs Trout Ranch for supplying the eggs to the classes.

Our board met in November and will propose a 2018 activity schedule at the upcoming meeting and will prepare a budget accordingly. Awards will be presented at the January meeting.

We picked our banquet committee leaders and set a tentative date of April 26. Our banquet is our largest fundraising event of the year.

Also, our members attended the WITU Northeast Regional meeting in Langlade in December. We allocated \$3,500 to regional projects.

Our membership meetings are held monthly (excluding May & November) on the first Wednesday of each month. Meetings are held at the Lone Oak Gun club just North of Gillett starting at 7 p.m.

—Tom Klatt

## Shaw-Paca Chapter

The ShawPaca Chapter will resume its winter meetings in January. Check out our Facebook page for an update on meeting times and places.

We are sponsoring a scholarship for two UW-SP students who are going into fisheries management.

We have renewed subscriptions for a dozen local schools for TROUT magazine.

Our annual banquet is April 5 at Northwinds Banquet Hall in Marion. Tickets will be mailed out soon. They will also be available at the

door the night of the banquet or by emailing the chapter at [shawpaca-TU@gmail.com](mailto:shawpaca-TU@gmail.com). We need donations and items for the banquet. If you have anything in mind or know of someone who could help, please email us. In the meantime, it's time to restock the fly boxes, strip and clean lines and prepare for the January opener. Happy Holidays to all. We'll see you on April 5.

—Nate Sipple

## Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter

It has been a busy and productive fall for the Southeast Wisconsin Chapter (SEWTU). Our members have been busy planning and participating in education and outreach programs, improving habitat at workdays and attending chapter meetings.

The largest event, though, was our Fall Habitat Fundraiser in October at the New Berlin Hills Golf Club. Stan Strelka and Rosie Marotz did an outstanding job organizing this event. We had a good turnout, and everyone enjoyed delicious hors d'oeuvres, socializing and being generous with their participation in a silent auction and bucket raffles.

This event would not have been successful without generous donations from our members, friends and local organizations. The number and quality of the items donated is always impressive, and we want to thank everyone who contributed items or purchased tickets to attend.

The funds raised from this event will be used to improve coldwater habitat. Other members who helped make our Fall Habitat Fundraiser successful were Jim Wierzba, who helped organize prizes, Ivan Novhava, who collected funds and distributed tickets, and Rich Vetrano, who printed the tickets and mailers.

We've had some great speakers at our chapter meetings this fall. Our special guest speaker in Sep-

tember was Dave Barron, who along with his wife, Nancy, are the owners of Jacquish Hollow Angler and Angler's Inn in Richland Center. Jacquish Hollow Angler provides guide services for trout angling on the spring creeks of southwestern Wisconsin, as well as Montana. In addition, they offer several casting clinics.

The topic of Dave's presentation was casting. He is a Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF) certified casting instructor and teaches classes designed for beginners, masters and other FFF certified instructors. Dave is an Orvis certified guide and a recipient of the Mel Kreiger Award for casting instruction excellence presented by the International Federation of Fly Fishers. Dave provided a well-liked and informative casting demonstration.

Our speaker in October was Rich Osthoff, a well-known fly tier, guide and author. Rich discussed trout fishing on his home waters, the dozens of excellent spring creeks of western Wisconsin. Rich has fished the Driftless Area for nearly five decades and offered many valuable insights into fly-fishing the region.

Our December meeting will continue with our longtime SEWTU holiday tradition of collecting canned goods for the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee, an optional gift exchange, entertaining screenings of fishing and conservation efforts and



## Chapter News



John Kempford

### SEWTU WORKS ON BLUFF CREEK AND RECEIVES NEW SIGN

The SEWTU Bluff Creek habitat work crew shows off their "esprit de corps" Adopt a State Wildlife Area sign. The sign was presented to them by Luke Roffler, the DNR fisheries biologist for Walworth County.

great camaraderie.

Workdays have also kept us busy. In September we worked at Bluff Creek, near Whitewater. Luke Roffler, the DNR Fisheries biologist for Walworth County, has been doing a great job identifying habitat projects and improving streams for trout.

We installed habitat features within the re-meander project site we helped out with last year. This work included placement of coarse woody material (tree tops, large branches, etc.), and half logs where necessary to direct stream energy, increase water velocities or provide overhead cover.

Other activities included in-stream weed pulling and cutting and dragging of small brush. This work will help enhance the next two phases of the recently completed re-meander project and build on the premier fishing produced by other restoration projects upstream and downstream of the project site.

On this same day we had members helping clean up Pike Creek in sponsorship with the Kenosha Sport fishing and Conservation Association. The clean-up went very well and we received a big thanks from the Kenosha group for our sponsorship.

The habitat committee planned another successful work day in October, continuing to improve trout habitat on Bluff Creek near the headwaters of the stream.

The chainsaws and operators, loppers, work gloves, waders, steel rakes, etc. came out in force to remove in-stream woody debris and nuisance plant growth, as well as shrub and tree removal along the

streambank. These activities will help restore the function and usability of the first Bluff Creek habitat restoration site, which has a proven history of high brown trout abundance and excellent size structure.

Also in October, Ken Rizzo helped to coordinate a work day with students and educators on Rosenow Creek described as a "stimulating field experience." Hats off and a big thank you to all of our Habitat Committee members who helped plan and lead these efforts, and to all of our members who showed up to help get the work completed.

SEWTU members continue to provide educational and outreach opportunities, and there have been several events this fall. In October, SEWTU members set up at the 9th annual Salmon Spectacular at the DNR Root River Steelhead Facility.

The facility hosted an open house to showcase the facilities and promote Lake Michigan fishing opportunities. The open house included guided tours, hands-on demonstrations of fish spawning, fish and fishing information stations, interactive fishing, rod casting lessons, knot tying, fly tying, and an onsite fishing boat used on Lake Michigan for trout and salmon fishing.

SEWTU members provided fly-casting lessons and had an informational table explaining what we do. We signed up several new members. Also in October, SEWTU had an information table and demonstrated fly tying and casting at the Shorewood Fish and Feathers Event at Hubbard Park in Shorewood. SEWTU Education Committee Chair



Ric Genthe

### SWTU'S ICEBREAKER EVENT COMING SOON

A scene from last year's SWTU Icebreaker. With entomology, fly tying, conservation, keynotes and more, this annual event has something for everyone. See the ad on page 14 for more information on the 2018 Icebreaker.

Rick Frye did a wonderful job working with member John Rennpferd organizing both of these events.

The fall season also means that the Oak Creek Fly tying events have started. This group, organized by Greg Schick, meets two times each month at the Oak Creek Community Center to tie flies. The group is currently focusing on midge patterns for winter fishing. This is a great opportunity to learn some new patterns and tying techniques, while enjoying a pleasant evening socializing.

SEWTU is a strong supporter of programs that connect veterans with fishing and fly-tying opportunities. Our chapter is very active in TU veteran's programs. Last fall, SEWTU member John Graba and many other members continued to organize fishing trips for veterans and conducted weekly fly tying. This is an outstanding opportunity SEWTU members provide the veterans.

Visit our website at [sewtu.tu.org](http://sewtu.tu.org) and Facebook page to learn more about SEWTU and our events.  
—Todd Durian

## Southern Wisconsin Chapter

SWTU hopes you will join us for our annual Icebreaker event on Saturday, January 13.

We are excited to welcome Tucker and Jacquie Nelson from Nelson Spring Creek Ranch in Livingston, Montana, as our keynote speakers. A web search and visit to their Facebook page will quickly show you that we're in for a real treat. Jacquie and Tucker will give two keynote presentations, and will be generally available for conversation and comment throughout the day!

Variety is the spice of life ... and fishing! That's why we asked Tim Landwehr of Tight Lines Fly Shop to share tips and tricks about the outstanding smallmouth fishing opportunities available to us. When the summer gets hot and the trout go down, the smallies heat up!

The Icebreaker is for everyone. Whether you can cast a fly 40 yards or never picked up a fly rod, this event is for you. It will again be held at the headquarters of American Family Insurance. It's right off the Interstate on the east side of Madi-

son. (6000 American Parkway, Madison, Wis. 53783)

Be sure to see the ad on page 14 of this edition of *Wisconsin Trout*. The day-long event will also feature some of the region's most innovative fly tyers and a legendary array of bucket raffle items.

Kids are welcome, and those under 12 get in free when accompanied by an adult. We again invite retired and active military personnel to our event. They will receive free admission with their military ID.

We'll see you on Saturday, January 13 in a friendly, roomy, professional and relaxed atmosphere. Visit [swtu.org](http://swtu.org) for more information.

A new tradition continues! A Women & Fly Fishing Happy Hour will again be held the evening before the Icebreaker. It will begin at 6 p.m. at the Ale Asylum, 2002 Pankratzt Street, Madison 53704.

Learn more about us, our events and activities at [swtu.org](http://swtu.org) or by finding us on Facebook.

—Drew Kasel



Jim Beecher

### SWTU CLEARS BRUSH ON MOUNT VERNON CREEK

The SWTU Stream Team was busy hacking, stacking and burning brush along a terrific stretch of Mount Vernon Creek that looks like it'll be a great place to drift a fly next spring.

# Chapter News



## Wild Rivers Chapter

Winter was slow getting here this year, but it has finally settled upon us, and the woodstove is back to being my best friend. Fall has been planning time for Wild Rivers. We are mapping out dates for our 2018 meeting schedule and habitat support work for the year.

Our annual expo in Ashland is Saturday, April 7 at Northland College. This is a fun event with live auction and presentations. Stay tuned for more details, as this expo is our major fundraising event for the year, and proceeds enable us to contribute money to the habitat projects that we support all year.

We extend a warm invitation to members from other chapters to drive north for a fun day with Wild Rivers members at this expo. One unique and really impressive thing about this expo is that all our partners who help us to protect and restore coldwater fisheries and their watersheds have display tables and information booths at the expo. It's impressive to see, in one large room, all the work that is being done in the seven counties that fit into the Wild Rivers Chapter.

We will be hosting the Fly Fishing Film Tour again. Show dates have not been set yet, but if you'd like to travel north to see the films, we will soon have the show dates and ticket prices on our Facebook page and TU.org website.

Several chapter leaders attended the WITU Northeast Region meeting, where all regional chapters get together to pool resources and commit money for next year's habitat projects.

Wild Rivers is partnering with other chapters in the region to fund a dam-removal project in the Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest, provide support for the salary of TU's Laura McFarland, continue habitat efforts in the Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest, and partner with other chapters to fund beaver abatement and stream restoration in Sawyer County, supporting DNR fisheries biologist Max Wolter.

In my last chapter report I mentioned having had a couple members from Arkansas TU come north for a fishing outing and a presentation on their efforts to introduce Bonneville Cutthroat into the White River system.

This winter, chapter member Jason Stewart has been invited to speak to the Arkansas chapter on some of his adventures as a fishing guide in the Northwoods. We are hoping to put together a crew of a couple other chapter members to make the trip with him, and do a little winter fishing in the White River system.

—Bob Rice

## Wisconsin Clear Waters

WCWTU began the new year with the election of new officers and directors. They are: Dick Duplessie, president; Jim Erickson, vice president; Greg Lynch, secretary; and Dave Zoellick, treasurer. New board members are Tom Sather and Greg Lynch.

Jim Erickson has set up great programs for the coming year. In October we heard from Tom Sather from Reel Recovery. In November Bob Haase discussed fly-tying methods and tips. In December Ira Giese discussed trout fishing the White River in Arkansas.

In January DNR staff will discuss local streams including stream restoration, trout surveys and results of the trout transfer. In February we'll look at Speed Fly Tying, with three guides demonstrating their favorite "20 Minute" flies. March 8 is our annual banquet. The March meet-

ing is our ClearWaters Master Tyers Night. In April Todd Mau will discuss Trempealeau and Buffalo County stream projects. May is our chapter Driftless Area camping trip.

In February we will review project grant requests for projects in the area. The intent is that the grants be spent on projects in the year of the grant. We supported eight different projects last season.

We are examining future projects, in conjunction with the DNR. We hope the Sand Creek project will be completed this year. Additionally, many old projects on streams such as Elk, McCaan and Duncan are in need of brushing. The board will decide on the creeks and order brushing days. We hope for a good turnout from members and nonmembers.

—Dick Duplessie

## Wisconsin River Valley Chapter

Happy Holidays, fellow TU members. On October 5 John Meachen, Bob Pils, Al Hauber, Perry Nikolai, Megan Radtke and myself were out wading in the Plover River with the Wausau East Biology, Chemistry and Physics kids lending a hand in the Annual Plover River Stream study. This is always a little bitter/sweet for me because it usually is the last event of the season and the beautiful fall leaves means that winter is soon to follow.

Retired DNR fisheries biologist Al Hauber gave the group the history of this section of the Plover. There were rock wingdams installed in the 50's and the many Christmas trees that were used in the 80's to narrow the stream south of the bridge. Al used to do fish surveys on the Plover, and the largest fish they found was a 28-inch brown trout.

The kids broke into groups and grabbed the tools that they needed for their area of study. Because there are deeper pools south of the bridge and riffles north of the bridge, the students spent about an hour in both areas so they could learn the preferred environments of the aquatic animals they found. They found huge mottled sculpins and a couple young brook lamprey.

They bring their critter samples back to the parking area and, after lunch, the aquatic critters are divided into groups and put into plastic bags so they can be passed around the group for a closer look. As these are being passed around, biology teacher Dave Coenen and Al Hauber talked about the different species and their importance to the ecosystem.

When the insect discussion has

been completed, a few folks from the DNR did a boom-shocking demonstration to show some of the other fish that call the river home, such as darters, stone rollers, horned chubs, red-belly dace, white suckers and brown and brook trout. This year we were fortunate to see a beautiful 14-inch male brook trout decked out in all his color.

A big thanks to Dan Holland, John Meachen and the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum for all their work putting together the "Convergence" event. It was a great opportunity to meet and listen to John Gierach, Bob White, Mike Dvorak, Victoria Houston, Alan Haney and Eric Anderson.

My favorite moment of that weekend was when a group of girl

scouts came into a room where artist Bob White was demonstrating painting. Bob invited a few of the Brownies to add some brush strokes to his painting. Three of them stepped up and each had an opportunity to add their expression to a painting that Bob had started. There were a few audible gasps from the adults, but the young painters seemed to be very proud of their additions to this masterpiece. It was very cool. Thank you so much to all of you who came to the event.

For news on upcoming events watch the WRVTU.org website and Facebook page. We will have an event set up for Jan 23 at Scannies in Wausau. Have a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.

—Linda Lehman

## Wolf River Chapter

The Wolf River Chapter's Fly Tying Consortium is Saturday, January 27 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Bring your own vise and materials, or come for the fish tales and camaraderie. Tie your favorite patterns for the Wolf River Chapter or learn to tie Wolf River Chapter members' favorite patterns at The Bear Paw Outdoor Adventure Resort, N3494 Highway

55, near White Lake. For more information contact Zach Buchanan at zbuch50@gmail.com.

The date for the Wolf River Meet'n'Greet has been set for May 19. Look for more information on our Facebook page or our website at wolfrivertu.org.

—Laurie Zen Netzow



Zach Buchanan

### WOLF RIVER TROUT CAN'T RESIST THIS BEAST

This wool-head fly is called the Beast of Burgert Lane, and is a triple-articulated version of Buchanan's Wolf Hound. Learn about this and other favorite Wolf River patterns at the Wolf River Chapter's Fly Tying Consortium on Saturday, January 27.

# 4,500

That's how many trout enthusiasts receive a copy of Wisconsin Trout.

Plus, copies are distributed at various TU events, fly shops, sporting goods stores and beyond.

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# Wisconsin's Fly Tyers

## Russ Bouck: soft hackles and wet flies

*Wisconsin's Fly Tyers is a new series that will highlight some of Wisconsin's great fly tyers. Most people do not realize how many great fly tyers we have in Wisconsin. Some are well known and others are less known, but some of the best tyers in the United States. Bob Haase will interview a different tyer for each issue of Wisconsin Trout and they will talk about their favorite flies, how they tie them, and how they fish them. It will provide an opportunity for us to learn about them, along with tying tips and information to make us better tyers and fly fishers. It will be done in a question & answer format, followed by step-by-step instructions on how to tie one of their favorite flies.*

By Bob Haase

Russ Bouck is one of the best soft hackle and wet fly tyers in Wisconsin. He has researched this style of fly and has a nice library of books tracing the history, characteristics and tying methods. Soft hackles and wets are very effective and yet they are not tied or fished as often as they should be. Russ and his wife, Sue, reside in Amherst, Wisconsin and are very active in Trout Unlimited.

### Russ... How did you get started in fly tying?

I have been tying for more than 50 years. My dad was a fly tyer and tied professionally, supplying flies for fly shops in Northern Wisconsin and the UP. When he would be tying, I would sit there and watch. When he finished, there would be feathers and tying materials laying around. I would pick up the materials and tie them onto the hook.

### I know you tie a lot of trout flies. What are some of your favorite styles or patterns of flies?

It's not so much about patterns as it is style of fly. I like to fish dry flies to a rising hatch but that does not happen often, so I fish a lot of wet flies, both soft hackles and winged wet flies, and a lot of Woolley Buggers. As far as specific patterns, I go more by color. I like the Grouse & Green, Gold-ribbed Hares Ear and the Orange Fish Hawk. The Orange Fish Hawk is an old English pattern that I think originally came from an Atlantic salmon fly.

The other thing that makes fishing wet flies so successful is to match the weight of the fly to the water you are fishing. Most people don't do this. I tie three different weights: unweighted soft hackles, regular soft hackles which are tied on heavier hooks and maybe has a wire ribbed body, and what I call industrial strength and they are all weighted with wire or beads.

Where you fish them will determine how you weight them and how you fish them.

### How did you get started tying soft hackles?

A guide from West Yellowstone, Montana introduced them to me. I was about 22 years old and we were on the Madison River and this guide came along and it was his day off. He was catching quite a few fish so I asked him what he was using. He showed me and explained what they were and how to fish them. I

started tying them and have been fishing them ever since. I have been lucky enough to fish from Maine to British Columbia and from Canada down to Arkansas and Tennessee and wherever I have gone they hit soft hackles. The catch is to match how you fish them to the waters you are fishing and what the trout are doing. That is something that a lot of people don't fully understand.

### Can you tell us a little about the history of soft hackles and where they originated from?

Soft hackles originated in the British Isles and they call them North Country flies there. If you read the old English books, it is akin to sinning to put weight on the flies. The rivers in that part England are not very fast or deep so you really don't need weight on the fly. If you fish the faster and deeper waters here in the United States, you often have to add some weight to the soft hackles to get them down. Wet-fly fishing predates dry-fly fishing and is mentioned in books dating back to 1496. Anyone wanting to know more about soft hackles and wet flies should read David Hughe's book entitled "Wet Flies." Another good book to read would be "The Soft Hackled Fly" by Sylvester Nemes.

### Soft hackles are very effective. Why do you think more people don't fish them?

I think part of the reason is that some people do not think it is in style. They used to fish wet flies 50 years ago. People like fishing dry flies, which is the ultimate in fly fishing. But hatches do not happen as often as people think it does. I just enjoy fishing them.

### You tie your own flies and have been doing this for a long time. What are some of the advantages of being able to tie your own flies?

I think in some of these fly shops they make the flies that are more like model insect building than they are in to making flies that fish will take. You don't have to get super fancy. You just need to give a few things like size, movement and sheen to it, and then fish them the way the bugs act.

You can get the added satisfaction of catching fish on something you tied yourself and you can also modify the flies to match specific situations.

### Do you have any tips for fishing soft hackles?

If you are fishing soft hackles up



### HALF A CENTURY OF FLY TYING

After 50 years of tying, Russ Bouck still enjoys tying and fishing soft hackles. The trick most folks overlook, he says, is to tie them in three different weights: unweighted soft hackles, regular soft hackles which are tied on heavier hooks and maybe has a wire ribbed body, and what he calls "industrial strength," which are weighted with wire or beads.

stream and letting them drift down, you want a rod that is fairly stiff because when you see that swirl you want to set the hook.

When you are fishing down and across stream you want a softer rod. You will get the same amount of hits, but the softer rod will give you more hookups because it almost acts like a shock absorber and doesn't pull the fly out of the fish's mouth. I learned that from Davy Wolten, a guide on the White River in Arkansas. Learn how to mend the line and present the flies so that flies act like the real insects in the water. You should also become familiar with a technique called the "Leisenring Lift".

A key to fishing wet flies is to get them to the right depth. It also helps to get some movement on the fly and that is where the soft hackle is at its best. A third thing is having a little bit of glitter because a lot of those insects under water have air bubbles attached to them. Caddis larvae when they come up to the surface expel air just like a vapor trail.

If you are going to fish the soft hackle against the current it helps if you put a dubbed thorax to keep the hackle from going back around the body of the fly.

Another thing you can do with soft hackles is to use them to fish to a hatch. If you can see the fish come up to the surface they are often taking something on the surface. If they swirl below the surface they are taking emergers below the surface. You can fish the wet fly upstream. If you see a swirl just cast above it and let it come down naturally and when you see a swirl you set the hook.

If you tie a soft hackle with a pheasant tail body and a yellow thorax it looks like a Sulphur coming out of its nympho shuck. You can actually tie this on a size #14 rather than a #16 because it represents the

insect and the shuck which is larger than just the insect

### What are some of the changes you have seen in fly tying over the years?

Rotary vises. The variety of bobbins. We never used bobbins when I first started... we just waxed the thread and held in our fingers. Tremendous availability in the sizes and styles of hooks.

There is such good selection now of different kinds of dubbing and the ability to make dubbing yourself. Hackle availability is a big thing. We were limited to Hungarian Partridge for soft hackles and now there are genetically bred chicken hackle (hen necks) and other feathers that also work great for soft hackles.

Rather than using feathers for winged wet flies I often use hair such as badger hair for my winged wet flies. We have a better variety and availability of materials for tying. The thing people have to realize is that there is nothing carved in stone. If you get a better idea or see something a little different, give it a try.

### Do you have any tying tips for someone just starting out tying soft hackles?

Take one or two patterns and just tie a lot of them so you can get used to the basics. Master the techniques and don't worry about the individual styles. When wrapping the hackle don't strip the fibers off of one side as some people recommend because you are removing half of the shorter hackle fibers. Just tie it in by the tip and take about two wraps. When tying soft hackles, avoid over-hackling. Sparse is best.

The following fly pattern is one of Russ's favorite soft hackle patterns called the Grouse & Green.

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The Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited is now a

listed entity within the Thrivent Choice program.

If you are a Thrivent member and have the ability to make Thrivent Choice donations, we would be honored if you'd consider including the Wisconsin Council of TU within your charitable planning, and making a donation to our cause.



# Russ Bouck's Grouse & Green Soft Hackle

The soft hackle pattern shown is the Grouse & Green. The color and body materials can change to match the situation. If you want to fish the fly in slow water, you might want to dub the body.

If it is fished in moderate current, you might want to add a wire rib. If you want to fish faster water, consider using a wire body as shown, or a bead to help get the fly down to where the fish are.

Materials and colors can

change, but the basic principles of a soft hackle are represented in this old English pattern called the Grouse & Green.

For more information on tying soft hackles and wet flies, you might want to go online or read the following books: "Wet Flies" by David Hughes, "Nymphs for Streams and Still Waters" by David Hughes or "The Soft Hackled Fly" by Sylvester Nemes.

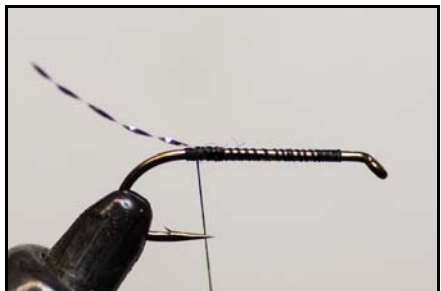


Grouse and Green Soft Hackle

## MATERIALS LIST

### Grouse and Green Soft Hackle

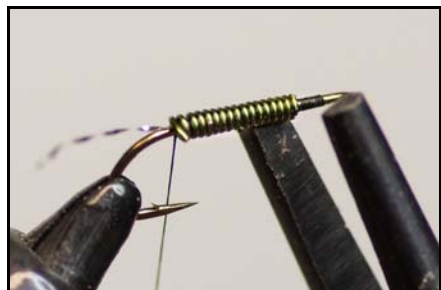
- Hook:** Any standard nymph hook.
- Thread:** 8/0 or 6/0 dark color
- Body:** Green Ultra Wire, medium to large
- Tail:** Krystal Flash



**Step 1:** Start the thread and tie in small piece of Krystal flash at the bend of the hook as shown.



**Step 4:** Prepare a partridge feather or other suitable soft hackle as shown in the picture. Some people prefer to pull the hackle off of one side, but this eliminates half of the shorter hackles that you may need based on the size of the feather and the size of the hook. Pull the soft fuzzy material from the stem and trim the hackle as shown.



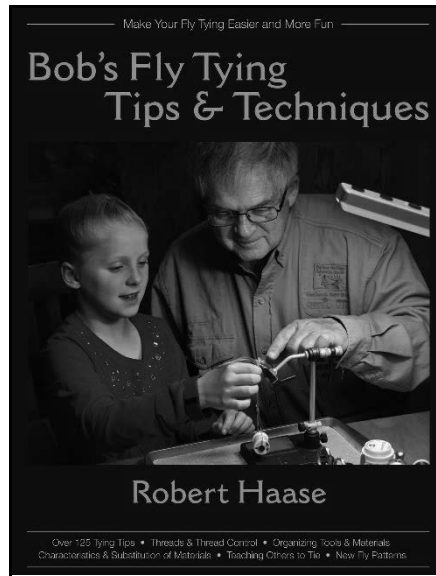
**Step 2:** Leave the thread at the bend of the hook and wrap the body with green Ultra Wire in brassie or medium depending on the size of the hook. Using a smooth-jaw pliers, grasp the ends of the wire with the tip of the pliers and rotate the pliers in the direction of the wrap to bring the tips of the cut off wire around the hook shank. Then wrap the thread through (between the wraps) of the wire. You should then apply a coating of head cement, UV set polymer or similar coating to help secure the wraps of wire.



**Step 5:** Tie the feather in by the tip and make one or two wraps as shown. Using a hackle pliers will make it easier and give you more control. The shiny side of the feather shown be toward the eye so the feather is cupped back toward the bend of the hook. Tie the feather off and trim off the stem. Use a half hitch tool or ball point pen to push the hackle back to make room to form a head. This also allows you to space the hackle evenly around the hook shank. Form a head and tie off with a whip finish or series of half hitches. The soft hackles of the feather create movement in the water, which helps entice the fish to take. This is a very effective pattern that works in most trout waters.



**Step 3:** Dub a thorax using a dark-colored dubbing such as black. You can make a dubbing loop, split the thread, or just dub the thread based on your personal preference. The thorax should be dubbed as shown, leaving room to wrap the partridge feather or other soft hackle.



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The cost of the book is \$25 plus, \$5 to cover the cost of tax and shipping. Just send a check in the amount of \$30 to: Bob Haase, W7949 Treptow Lane, Eldorado, WI 54932. Please include the first name of the person receiving the book and Bob will sign and include a short note to that person.

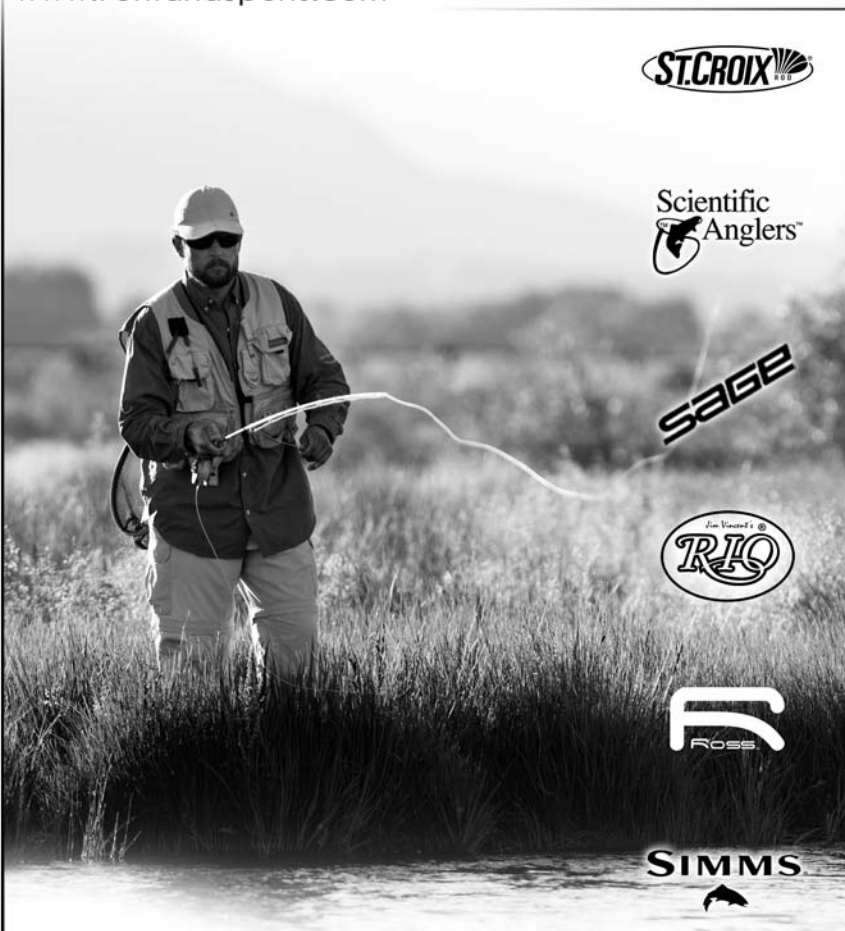
This donation is in addition to the \$1 that Bob is donating to Wisconsin TU for each book sold. The \$1 donation does not have a time limit and will be used for purchasing fly tying materials for our youth fly tying programs. Thank you for your support and the support of TU activities.



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# Workshop highlights watershed assessment

By Mike San Dretto

Watershed assessment was the major focus of this year's Workshop on Science for Trout Stream Restoration. Looking at an entire watershed often leads to the best answers for trout habitat restoration. The workshop, now in its fifth year, was held in October at UW-Stevens Point. A continuing theme of this conference is using the best and most recent scientific research available. This leads to looking at the whole stream, everything going on in it and the riparian zone which supports it.

What better watershed to use for the workshop than the Little Plover River? Not only is it near Stevens Point, but it's also one of the most studied rivers in Wisconsin, since portions of it dried up in 2005. Circumstances made it necessary for all local stakeholders to work together and look at all aspects of the problem and potential solutions.

A diverse faculty included fishery biologists, hydrologists, UWSP faculty and a wetlands specialist. DNR and community leaders presented a session on team development for watershed assessment. Attendees included DNR fisheries and stream restoration personnel, along with TU members and others interested in stream restoration.

The morning was spent on the UW-Stevens Point campus. Those present learned where to find information about a watershed, the importance of ground water and evaluating high-water-use areas.

Study of wetlands and their contribution to the river was part of the discussion. Analysis of stream flow rates needed for trout and study of brook trout populations in the Little Plover were discussed as well.

While understanding the science provides valuable information about the status of a stream, working on a problem as severe as the condition of the Little Plover River required input from many groups. Community members and leaders with representatives from agriculture and industry collaborated. Take-home points were to get beyond finger pointing and focus on the problem and solutions.

There is nothing like getting out into the field on a sunny fall day. The afternoon was spent evaluating two sites. We spent a portion of the day on the Little Plover looking at locations for natural and cost-effective trout habitat improvement. The group also studied areas of potential wetland restoration with intent to increase stream flow.

The idea for the annual workshop came from Ray White, who actively participates in the workshop and its planning. His knowledge of Wisconsin trout habitat goes back to his time as a fisheries biologist in the Wisconsin Conservation Department (now the DNR). Ray is a believer in lifelong learning. That interest in learning lead to a career of teaching and sharing knowledge about trout habitat. As a past associate professor of fisheries at Michigan State and Montana State universities, he understands that

sharing information leads to new knowledge and new ideas. Ray received the Aldo Starker Leopold Award from the Wild Trout Symposium for his work.

Because of the time he spent as a Wisconsin fisheries biologist, Ray White understands how hard DNR fisheries and stream restoration people work, but they don't always have access to the latest stream science research. Seeing the need for DNR personnel to keep up with new developments, Ray and his wife Almut made an endowment to UW-Stevens Point which supports the workshop. As a long-standing member of Trout Unlimited, Ray real-

ized this workshop would also be useful to Trout Unlimited members interested in trout habitat restoration. Those of us TU members who have attended have learned much, found new restoration ideas and think differently about our streams. Think about joining us next year.

*Mike San Dretto is past president of the Central Wisconsin Chapter and currently a core team member of the TU CARES collaborative restoration effort of the four Central Region TU Chapters. He truly enjoys the time he gets to spend outdoors on trout streams.*



Joanna Griffin

## WORKSHOP ON SCIENCE FOR TROUT STREAM RESTORATION

Tracy Hames, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, explains the Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project during the Fifth Annual Workshop on Science for Trout Stream Restoration. The project is a multi-party collaboration led by the Village of Plover to improve the health of the Little Plover River Watershed.

# Watershed Access Fund

## Winter 2018 update

The 2017 Watershed Access Fund campaign has come to an end and we had another excellent year of financial support. Through your generous contributions we raised more than \$6,000. Thank you so much.

This past year, this fund was able to secure an important link on the "Horse-shoe" section of the North Fork of the Bad Axe. Without your continued support, this wouldn't have been a reality.

Chapters can request up to \$7,500, and two chapters may each request for a single acquisition. Each chapter would have to match 50 percent of the grant. This could provide as much as \$15,000 for a single purchase or easement. The matching 50 percent from chapters can be in the form of volunteer hours.

The 2018 fundraising campaign is under way, and you should have received the campaign letter. Please consider supporting this important program so valuable trout streams across this state can be protected for permanent access and enjoyment.

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and holiday season. I wish you the best in the 2018 fishing season.

*Doug Brown, Wisconsin TU Watershed Access Fund Chair*

### 2017 Contributors

Ed Barnes	Middleton WI	David Dybdahl	Middleton WI
James Baxter	Whitefish Bay WI	Chuck Egle	Amherst Junction WI
Jolene Berg	Chippewa Falls WI	Beatrice, William Evans	NewRichmond
Robert Burke	Markesan WI	John Ewen	Neenah WI
Dennis Buzzar	DeForest WI	Erik Forsgren	Fremont WI
Tom Crabb	Monona WI	Richard Galling	Hartland WI
Terry Cummings	Rhineland WI	Robert Galvin	Crivitz WI
David Darling	River Falls WI	Daniel Geddes	Appleton WI
Richard Duplessie	Eau Claire WI	Giorgio Gimelli	Madison WI

Ron & Margery Ginsbach	Elmwood WI	Gary Preisler	West Bend WI
Thomas Goodman	Miami FL	Randall Rake	Helena MT
Dan Grauer	Wausau WI	Bob Retko	Cedarburg WI
John Gribb	Mt. Horeb WI	Ken Rizzo	Oconomowoc WI
Jack Halbrehder	Sparta WI	James Roden	Eau Claire WI
Stephen Hawk	Madison WI	Dan Rorabeck	Hudson WI
Ashton Hawk	Madison WI	Nancy Rosenbacher	Waupaca WI
James Hayett	Hartland WI	Michael San Dretto	Neenah WI
Jan & Mark Heifner	Appleton WI	Jeff & Mary Schmoeger	Lake Mills WI
Walter Hellyer	Egg Harbor WI	George Shinnors	Antigo WI
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Mike Hittle	Appleton WI	Wayne Stockman	Spring Valley WI
Ed & Irene Josephs	Oconomowoc WI	Juergen Stuebs	Wautoma WI
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Ray Piehl	Wautoma WI		

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter of TU  
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# Driftless Rambler

With Duke Welter  
TUDARE Outreach Coordinator

With a gray December sky dropping quiet “slowflakes” on us this morning, it’s been a nice time to sit back and reflect on the season just past, with a few thoughts about what’s ahead. Over the weekend we attended one of our favorite holiday happenings, a bluegrass (and more) concert at a country crossroads dance hall between Middle Ridge and St. Josephs Ridge, always a heart-filling time with good friends and fine music.

Once the leaves drop here, a coating of new snow on the ridges and hillsides accentuates the rock faces and limestone spires one usually can’t see for the foliage. Driving around, I am probably a safety hazard to other motorists, because I tend to stop to take a picture of another rock face or column I’ve never seen before. The Three Chimneys outside Viroqua, Monument Rock near Liberty Pole or the Elephant Rock near Lloyd may be better known, but it seems almost every valley in the region has its own landmark stone structure.

A busy personal schedule has kept me mostly away from bird hunting this fall, but now in December my springer Josie and I have finally had a few outings chasing pheasant on public lands along some of our streams. It’s been just a joy to follow my merry bird dog and appreciate viewing a recent stream project just waiting to be fished. We poke out along those grassy meanders and work the buffered stream edges, and we’ve had success despite my middling shooting.

We can see the many redds in those projects, scoured out of silt and populated by trout of a size I almost never encounter when I’m fishing for them. Those trout scoot off when Josie snuffles along the water’s edge, but I know they’ll be back soon. It’s gratifying to know support from our TU comrades helped create the conditions for those active spawners, rebuilding the habitat they need.

## Restoration progress

The year past saw significant progress made on various aspects of restoration across the region. Iowa’s Coldwater Conservancy is incorporated, organized and working to obtain stream access easements, with an eye to developing good projects on those sites.

In Minnesota, five miles of new stream access easements were just closed by their DNR, with more likely to follow by year’s end. Our fall bus tour of projects there highlighted some of the innovative work being funded by the Lessard-Sams sales tax dollars in that state. Minnesota TU chapters have been leading the way in Driftless stream restoration using those funds. Ah, if our other Driftless states could just have that dollar resource available, what we all could do!

In Wisconsin, more than \$1.2 million in funding from the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service went into more than 30

Driftless projects this season. I’m repeatedly amazed by the success Jeff Hastings and DARE have had in securing large regional Farm Bill grants, which are then put into individual projects in counties across the region. Add to that the funding from TU chapters, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Wisconsin Trout Stamp and other sources, and the support for this work has been outstanding.

For 2018, dozens of projects have applied for more of that NRCS funding across Wisconsin. If approved, it will cover about 70 percent of the project costs, and will support both DNR crews and private contractors. We’ll find out soon whether funding has been approved for many of those projects, and then will have a busy time finding the remaining share from other sources.

Landowners provide a public fishing easement, and we find the full project cost wherever we can. If your chapter is sitting on a cache of cash, or if you personally are looking for a charitable tax deduction that does demonstrable good, consider supporting a project with one of our TUDARE partners.

## Butchering operation in Vernon County?

Out here in Vernon County, we are facing a serious threat to our water resources and it’s got a lot of people concerned. A large pork producer, Lynch Provisions, has bought Driftless Meats, a butchering operation between Viroqua and Westby just off the four-lane Highway 14 (known around here as the “Uff-da Bahn”). The facility is located in the uppermost drainage area of the North Fork of the Bad Axe River. Lynch proposes to butcher and process as many as 400,000 hogs a year.

Driftless Meats formerly handled locally grown pork, lamb, beef and deer harvested around here. The new company has told local farmers they won’t process local meat, just hogs from large hog operations. While other areas, notably Iowa, are dotted with these facilities, they aren’t a feature of the countryside in Vernon or Crawford counties right now. The company doesn’t like to haul pigs more than 50 miles, which leaves people wondering how many big hog barns they will build close by. That’s a lot of pig manure, which would have to be land spread, in addition to the cow manure already being spread from the many dairy farms around here.

It’s doubly ironic that this area is home to Organic Valley, the nation’s largest organic dairy co-op, as well as hundreds of small Amish farmers, many of whom are organic and sustainably certified.

Often DNR proclaims that large confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are subject to a higher level of regulatory oversight than other agricultural operations. That may be true, to some extent. But even the rules regulating CAFOs and other ag operations are open to



the criticism that they aren’t strong enough, or aren’t being enforced.

Even with some oversight by the DNR or the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), we have many situations where resources are being damaged. Kewaunee County, with five times as many cows as people, faces disastrous well-water contamination because all that manure is going in shallow soils and fractured limestone bedrock and poisoning the groundwater.

Vernon County, and the whole Driftless Area, also has shallow bedrock beneath shallow soils. It should be tremendously wary of the threat posed by 200,000 hogs in confinement.

But Vernon County isn’t zoned, and the township where Driftless Meats isn’t, either. That takes away the single most useful tool municipalities can use to prevent resource damage. If local residents don’t take action, they could get one noxious industrial operation, which will open the way for more. Right now, the only tool they have is public opinion.

An initial question was where will the waste water from the plant be taken for processing? Concerned citizens pressured nearby cities with wastewater treatment facilities, such as Sparta, Viroqua and Richland Center, not to accept waste water from a new hog operation. But apparently the company has struck an agreement with Sparta.

Many around here pride themselves on Vernon County’s high-quality trout streams, and the multi-billion-dollar benefit to the Driftless economy from anglers. Mat Wagner and his wife, Geri Meyer, who operate Driftless Angler Fly Shop in Viroqua, feel the threat personally:

“They’re trying to get a foot in

the door with this hog butchering operation,” Wagner said, “But even bigger, they will want to get these 50,000-pig farms started all over the area. Why can’t people think of how this will affect the way people live around here? The butchering operation will be just upwind of the Westby to Viroqua bike trail. How many people will want to ride there? What’s the traffic going to be like, as they haul all those pigs through Westby and Viroqua?”

“This fragile geology around here can’t handle the manure from all those pigs, and those operations will most likely hurt our groundwater,” Wagner said. “It’s super shortsighted to consider allowing this net negative for the area, instead of encouraging them to look elsewhere. I can’t believe it. This will be harmful to the environment, air quality and our streams, all for a handful of really crappy jobs.”

Well, what’s an angler to do? “Call the policy makers. The mayor of Viroqua, the county board chair, the tourism committee chair, the Viroqua Main Street Chamber,” Wagner said. “Let them know you won’t come here to fish if they’re going to make Vernon County a center for the big pig industry.”

During the past decade or so, the Driftless Angler has become a respected fixture around here, both for locals and for visitors. As the area’s fishing attractions have increased, they’ve been here with guides and advice and gear. And they’ve been unafraid to speak out against threats to area waters. But this development bodes poorly. “If this operation comes in and hurts our business,” Wagner says, “we’ll just have to figure out what to do.”

Underneath that cloak of new snow, rather than an entirely placid land, some troubling currents are to be found.



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