Watershed Access Fund and Friends of Wisconsin Trout Unlimited update

Grant programs finding tremendous success

Please consider supporting our habitat and access grant programs.

By Kim McCarthy, WITU Grant Programs Coordinator

WITU turns 50

By Todd Franklin, Wisconsin Trout Editor

The tumultuous sixties were over, and Americans were charging into a new decade. It was 1979. The Beatles had broken up, while Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix both died of overdoses at age 27. Four students were killed by National Guardsmen at Kent State University in Ohio during a demonstration protesting the U.S. incursion into Cambodia. The Datsun 240-Z is introduced to American car buyers and the Boeing 747 is introduced to world travelers. George C. Scott delivers an Academy-Award-winning performance in the movie Patton. Other movie hits that year included MASH, Airport, Love Story and best-picture winner Midnight Cowboy. A first-class stamp was six cents.

Here in Wisconsin, the Seattle Pilots, after only one year, moved to Milwaukee and became the Brewers. A bomb planted by anti-war extremists exploded at the University of Wisconsin's Army Math Research Center in Madison, killing 33-year-old researcher Robert Fusco.

Our own Sen. Gaylord Nelson suggested Earth Day as a means to focus national attention on ecological issues. Organizers identified 12 anti-environment members of the U.S. House and Senate, seven of whom lost their seats.

Tough times for trout waters

It was a tough time for trout, however. Many coldwater streams and rivers were being used for sewage discharge. Others were being straightened, sometimes legally, sometimes not. Some were lost forever when they were damned to create lakeside housing developments or federal flood control projects, and many more nearly met that same fate. That includes the entire Blue River Watershed in Iowa and Grant counties, where nine dams were proposed by the Soil Conservation Service.

Abuses such as these inspired a group of passionate and very determined Wisconsinites to establish the Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited. Although TU National had been in existence since 1959, and several chapters had formed in Wisconsin, including Wolf River, Green Bay, Southeast and Southern. There was an obvious need for a state-level Trout Unlimited presence.

In July, they convened in Madison for an organizational meeting. The list of attendees included names we’re now familiar with, such as Robert Hunt, Ray White, Nash Williams, Bronson LaFollette, Bill Flander, Dick Ela, John Lawton, Herb Buettner, George Steed, Larry Knack, Jack Mason, Cliff Brynolson, Joe Simpson, Jim Stewart, Fred Horn, Jack Walworth, Dennis Bryan, Robert Carlene, Les Bishop, along with Doug Hart of the Green Bay Packers and TU National Executive Director Pete Van Bylenbeek.

The young new Council wasted no time getting down to business. In 1971 the Council supported legislation prohibiting the impoundment of trout streams without legislative approval.

By 1973 the Council had impressed TU National enough that they hosted the annual meeting. In 1973, the Council’s first chairman, Jim Stewart, was elected vice president of TU National. Jim was also a founder and first president of the Southern Wisconsin Chapter. He was the first of many Wisconsin TU leaders to serve key roles for TU National.

Following in his footsteps the years were some of our most active and influential leaders, such as Steve Born, John Christiansen, Dan Woniewski, Duke Welter and Henry Kolitz.

The Council pushed hard for a trout stamp, supporting Rep. Jon Wilcox of Wautoma, who introduced legislation calling for a $1
The list of names from the Council’s organizational meeting includes many instrumental leaders, some of who are now memorialized via awards (The Council’s Robert Hunt Resource Professional Award) and events (Southern Wisconsin Chapter’s Nash Williams Awards Banquet). They were prominent business leaders, attorneys and even a Green Bay Packer — and all were hoping to turn the tide that threatened our coldwater resources.
Update on DNR habitat and stream projects

Wisconsin DNR habitat project teams were still sidelined by Covid-19 rules as of press time for Wisconsin Trout. A survey of fisheries leaders and project teams found the latter still waiting for the go-ahead. Fisheries Bureau Assistant Director Todd Kalish said in early June “We no longer remember the name of the stream and my friend died several years ago. Perhaps early records of the Wisconsin Conservation Department might have records of Wisconsin Grayling, or historical records from Iron County may reference local fishermen catching Grayling. I recommended trying to restore them many years ago to the Wisconsin DNR Endangered Resources Bureau Director, but to no avail. If Michigan restored them successfully, perhaps we can someday get them back in Wisconsin.

By Mike Kuhr, State Council Chair

Chair’s Column

Look back, pause, then look forward

History has been weighing on me lately. For more than a year now I’ve been visualizing shutting and tease out details of the State Council’s 50th Anniversary Celebration.

I envisioned a large gathering of outdoor enthusiasts on the banks of one of our beloved trout streams, or maybe even one of our Great Lakes. We’d talk about how 50 years ago, our great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents were doing the first TU Chapters — Green Bay, Wolf River, Southeastern Wisconsin and Southern Wisconsin — came together and formed the Wisconsin State Council of TU.

We’d recognize that the threats many of our coldwater resources faced then, such as dams, water withdrawals and fishing abuse, are still threats today. We’d make analogies of brook trout being the "canaries in the coal mine," and add climate change to the list of challenges our watersheds face.

Growing in this big celebration of TU in our state. We now have members in 21 chapters who have taken it upon themselves to protect their home waters. But water doesn’t recognize the lines on our maps. It only responds to changing climate. The Council amplifies the conservation message and strengthens local efforts to protect our waters.

Having reflected upon our past, and reaffirmed the Council’s role in sustaining our coldwater resources, we would raise a glass and look forward to the next 50 years! At least, that’s how I pictured it playing out. Then COVID-19 hit, and things haven’t been the same since.

Three months of being “safer at home” has brought some new perspective. We’ve done our part to protect our family and those around us in our community. We’ve been spending more time outdoors, not days or weeks at a time, but short daily jaunts exploring nature close to home.

I’m definitely a person who needs to be near the water — wading in it, hiking by it, paddling on it. It’s my connection to the natural world. These places keep me grounded and give me a sense of place. As it turns out, a lot of folks have been reconnecting with nature. Our public lands and our public access to water have never been more important. We’ll need the voices of all these folks in our effort to renew the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. Wisconsin’s iconic public lands program and the source of all those white and green “public fishing assessment” signs.

I believe TU has a role to play as we start back down the path to “normal.” I know I’m ready to volunteer again, whether it’s cutting brush, rolling rock, cleaning up trash or whatever our local waterways need. Our TU workdays could be just the outlet many people are looking for.

We offers this opportunity to “do some good” while being respectful of everyone’s health. It won’t be the same, but we can keep our faces covered, keep our distance from each other and skip communal lunches.

The people in this organization are what I miss the most: Sharing moments on the water and sharing those stories afterwards. I know it’s been difficult to function as an organization these last few months, but I’m convinced that TU will come through this moment as a stronger organization.

The strength will come from opening our doors a little wider. It’s not enough to come through this pandemic and go back to normal. Normal will not keep us relevant during the next 50 years. We need to be extra special if we are to preserve the woods, meadows and waters that we cherish for future generations.

So what does it mean to “open the doors a little wider”? I’m a white male in my mid-40’s and I’ve never had a problem fitting into this organization. That’s not the case for a lot of people who may be of a different gender, or race or generation. I feel most comfortable knee deep in a trout stream. What makes me uncomfortable is realizing that not everyone feels at ease recreating outdoors. It’s up to us to change that.

We have the tools in place, such as Trout In the Classroom, youth conservation and fishing programs, 5 Rivers College dubs, Diversity and Women’s initiatives, citizen science and restoration workdays, to start breaking down barriers.

It’s our responsibility to make space in TU for all voices to be heard. This organization has a way of bringing out the best in people. If we want our work to mean something in 50 years, we will have to evolve. Everyone deserves access to cold, clean, fishable water.

I’m looking forward to helping the next generation of conservationists rise up and occupy their space in the outdoor community, so that we can continue building our coldwater legacy. Are you with me?

Youth camp postponed until 2021

Due to Covid-19, we postponed this year’s youth camp. After multi- phone calls with the staff at Pine Lake Bible camp, TU National camp directors and varying recommenda- tions from the Centers for Disease Control and the Wisconsin Department of Public Health and the American Campers Association, we made the decision to postpone the camp until 2021.

Not only is it a big disappointment for all the youth we had signed up, but it is a major disappointment for all the TU members involved with the camp. We were looking forward to the camp this year, as there was a lot of early registration and we had 11 youth signed up, with quite a few inquiries about the camp.

It’s hard to believe, but there is a silver lining within all this. All the campers are able to attend in 2021. This means we already have 11 youth signed up for next year, leaving only nine positions available when we start registration next Feb- ruary. So, if your chapter usually sends a youth and you do not have anyone lined up, please start early on finding a camper for next year, as we anticipate filling out the roster early.

The camp will be August 19-22, 2021. Watch for more information in the fall issue of Wisconsin Trout.
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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 if you are interested in staying informed, please send an email to mail@WITU.org to be added to the mailing list. If you are currently receiving 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 if you are interested in staying informed, please send an email to mail@WITU.org to be added to the mailing list.
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Visit the Wisconsin State Council’s web site at wicounciltu.org, or find us on Facebook.
Mining update

News regarding the Back Forty Project and the proposed sulfide mine in Oneida County.

By Allison Werner, River Alliance of Wisconsin

Mining activities have not slowed down much in the last few months. Badger Minerals has begun exploratory drilling and the Menominee River is threatened by exploratory drilling from the DNR. They began drilling the first week of June. Tribal nations, non-profit organizations and local residents have come together to protect the Wolf River from this threat. They are holding a four-part virtual panel series that will feature tribal historians, tribal allies and environmental and political experts connected to the Wolf and Menominee Rivers. Panclists will discuss their experiences in cultural and environmental activism, as well as their knowledge of the mining process, followed by a brief question-and-answer session. All events in the series will take place online from 6:30-7:30pm. The dates and topics are:

- Tribal Allies, July 7
- Mining & the Environment, July 21
- Regulatory Mining Process, August 4
- You can learn more about the panel series at wolfriveractioncommittee.com/

Remembering Dan Wisniewski, 1946-2020

Dan Wisniewski, a stalwart leader of TU and a major contributor to Wisconsin resource issues for more than three decades, passed away from heart complications on April 16 in Madison. He is survived by his wife, Frances De Graff, five children and eight grandchildren. He was 73.

During his career, Dan served as a key role in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, as chief of staff to Gov. Tony Evers and policy advisor to two other governors. He was also an aide to two Dane County supervisors and secretary of the Bureau of Communications of Local Governments (BCPL). He was a volunteer and leader of several key organizations, including Kathleen Falls. He was a key advisor to Kathleen Falls as she organized and won Wisconsin’s first and only conservation fund referendum.

As a volunteer and leader of the Northwoods Land Trust, Dane County Parks Commission and other groups. He led efforts to protect the Menominee River by purchasing the Menominee River from the Badger Minerals on behalf of the Trust. He was a citizen volunteer and leader of the Northwoods Land Trust, Dane County Parks Commission and other groups. He led efforts to continue and strengthen the state’s Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and moved forward some of the state’s major land acquisition and conservation efforts.

At the national level, Dan spoke and worked for public access to rivers. He was a key strategist as the NLC and grassroots leaders fought two successive efforts in 2004 and 2007 to put TU on the sidelines when public access rights to waters were threatened. Big-monied interests in the west had bet that if they could forestall TU from speaking for access rights, they could abrogate Montana’s stream access law and limit public access. But they were turned back and TU developed a workable policy to decide how to take an active role to protect access rights.

Dan also worked at the national level to develop a TU program to help acquire public access rights to key riverine lands. Both Wisconsin TU (in 2020) and Gathering Waters (in 2017), the state’s land trust umbrella organization, honored Dan with Lifetime Achievement Awards for his work.

Dan’s obituary summed up his contributions: “Dan dedicated his life to the betterment of Wisconsin and love of his family and friends, sharing his wisdom, kindness and optimism with all he encountered.”

Dan’s family asked that contributions in his memory be given to the Wisconsin Trust, Dane County Parks, Wisconsin’s First and Only Local Conservation Fund, or the Northwoods Land Trust or Dane County Parks Endowment Fund.

—Dave Welter

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trout stamp, with all funds going toward habitat restoration and none toward put-and-take stocking. Finally, in 1977 the efforts of the Council, chapters and all TU members paid off, and the first stamps would be sold in 1978. By the end of 1978, the DNR had approved more than $225,000 in habitat improvement projects. Also in 1978, the Council supported legislation imposing stricter standards on sewage discharges into trout streams. Here are more of the Council’s historic highlights.

1980s highlights
* 1980: Recognizing the damage being done to trout streams and spring ponds by beavers, the Council establishes a Beaver Committee and commences putting together a video to educate the public about the situation.
* 1981: Madison TU members from throughout the state establishes six new chapters: Aldo Leopold, Chequamegon, Oconto River, Blackhawk, Shaw-Paca and Wisconsin River Valley.
* 1984: The Council’s first host fishing banquet at the Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. About 250 attendees help raise more than $5,000 for the Council. Meanwhile, Council members create three new chapters: Wild Rivers, Marinette County and Lakeshore. There were 22 chapters at the time, with statewide membership approaching 2,000.
* 1986: The Council creates a regional structure to help chapters work together on issues in their part of the state. The Council supports an amendment to the DNR’s budget imposing penalties of $100-$200 for illegal harvesting of trout.
* 1987: A new multi-category regulation system was introduced in 1990.

1990s highlights
* 1986: With a desire to increase revenues to meet the challenges of cold-water conservation in the 1990s, the Council establishes its Friends of Wisconsin Trout program, allowing for tax-deductible donations for the protection and restoration of coldwater resources.
* 1991: The Council’s Friends of Wisconsin TU makes its first grants to support projects on Black Earth Creek, West Fork Kickapoo and Saal Spring Pond in Langlade County.
* 1991: Lincoln County approves the removal of the Prairie Dells Dam on the Prairie River, while the Willow Falls Dam in St. Croix County is removed.
* 1992: Council Chair Stephen Born submits a letter to DNR Secretary Buzz Besadny regarding the Council’s concerns that the early trout season held in only eight southwestern counties has a disproportionate impact on the coldwater resources of that area.
* 1993: The Council forms a Catch-and-Release Committee to educate the public about the proper methods for releasing trout.
* 1993: The Council opposes the filling oraltering of 80 acres of wetlands by the Crandon Mining Co.
* 1995: The Council officially goes on record opposing the Crandon Mining Co.
* 1996: Inspired by Robert Hunt’s research showing about half a million trout die in Wisconsin each year as a result of mishandling during release, the Council’s Consider CPR IDEA FORMED IN 1993 committee debuts a video on the proper techniques for safely handling trout for release. The script for the video was developed “Consider Proper Release” signage to be placed along trout streams.
* 1998: The Council joins a lawsuit against a dairy farm operation on Black Earth Creek that had moved 500-700 cows into a feedlot into the headwaters, allowing them unrestricted and direct access to the creek.
* 1998: After three years of $1.5 million in inland trout stamp fund surpluses, the Council’s ad hoc Trout Stamp Committee creates and submits a report with recommendations to the DNR. The DNR adopts many of the council’s suggestions and recommendations. In addition, the report recommended that the Council establish a Trout Stamp Coordinator to work with the DNR in promoting the trout stamp program and keeping the Council and chapters updated on the program’s progress.
* 1999: The Council establishes its first website, called “a home page” at the time, thanks to the efforts of Andy Lamberson.
* 2000: A study by TU National shows that Wisconsin’s trout management programs do not have permitting authority over wetlands that are not connected to navigable waters. The bill was eventually signed into law.
* 2001: The Council establishes the Jeff Carlson award in honor of Carlson, who spearheaded brook trout restoration efforts near Ashland, including the establishment of the Whitley Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Carlson died unexpectedly of cancer at age 39.
* 2001: The Council goes on record opposing plans by two republican lawmakers to split the DNR into two agencies. The effort to split the agency eventually failed.
* 2001: The Council establishes an endowment fund for individuals and corporations to make donations to further the Council’s goals.
* 2003: The Council produces a pulled runoff toolkit to help chapters identify and correct suspected nonpoint source pollution sites in their areas.
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Highlights from the 2000’s
* 2000: Word of a plan by Perrier to drill a 100-foot-deep well in the Mecan Mine.
* 2000: The Wisconsin Inland Trout Stamp turns 30 years old.
* 2000: Recognizing the damage being done to trout streams and spring ponds by beavers, the Council establishes a Beaver Committee and commences putting together a video to educate the public about the situation.
* 2000: The Council announces plans to create a new Land Access Fund, which was created with proceeds from the 2010 banquet being used as seed funding. Kim Mc-
Highlights from the 2010’s

2013: Tu National chooses the Council to host its Midwest Regional Meeting in the Madison area. The meeting includes an event at the MacKenzie Center near Poynette.

2014: The Council hosts a successful second annual Stream Girls event at the MacKenzie Center near Poynette. Some operations are dangerously close to trout streams.

2015: Wisconsin TU license plates become available. Many TU members are excited to display their new plates, most of them choosing personalized versions.

2015: As the state legislature debates the proposed 2015-2017 budget, Wisconsin TU encourages members to communicate their opposition to: A freeze of stream bank easement acquisitions; elimination of science positions within the Wisconsin DNR and removing the Natural Resources Board advisory-only.

COUNCIL MEMBERS HAVE TAUGHT THOUSANDS OF KIDS TO TIE A FLY

In 2007 Bob Haase and Linda Lehman (shown here) volunteered to teach fly tying to kids at a youth expo in Beaver Dam. The program evolved into the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo, now held in Poynette. Since that first year, many Council volunteers have taught thousands of kids how to be a fly, with encouragement to use the fly to catch bluegills.

The resolution was passed in all 14 counties in which it was introduced, due to the efforts of dedicated Wisconsin TU members.

* 2017: The Council hosts a successful third annual Stream Girls event. There were 13 great campers, including the first two girls. Campers came from throughout the state, and even a couple from out of state.

* 2016: In ongoing efforts to bring more women into the TU community, Women’s Initiative Coordinator Heidi Oberstadt encourages chapters to...
nominating Women's Initiative Chairs. * 2016: The Council and members continue to press the DNR to remove from potential land sales properties that are adjacent to trout streams and spring ponds. The Council also successfully lobbied against provisions in a large bill that allowed discharge permitting exemptions from drainages and roadside ditches, which serve as fish spawning habitat, or passageways to fish spawning habitat.

* 2016: The Council denounces an opinion issued by Attorney General Brad Schimel. As a result, it appears that DNR will no longer perform cumulative impact analysis of high-capacity well applications, and will only review wells using the certain criteria. In addition, DNR will only impose permit restrictions which are explicitly allowed by statute, which will consider upon request whether permit restrictions on existing permits will remain in force. Wisconsin TU believes that the DNR’s adoption of the attorney general’s opinion, and the broad action with significant statewide impacts that it triggers, sidesteps both legislative and court processes. Second, Wisconsin TU strongly believes that well permits should not be ignored issuing the presence of existing high-capacity wells.

* 2016: Council volunteers teach more than 750 kids how to tie a fly at the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo near Poyntette.

* 2016: The Council’s Watershed Access Fund grant program helps secure an easement on the “horseshoe” section of the North Fork of the Bad Axe River in Vernon County.

* 2016: Numerous bills were introduced concerning a variety of topics including groundwater regulatory reform, high-capacity wells, aquaculture regulatory reform, stream work liability immunity, railroad crossings and in-stream dredging. The Council’s Legislative Committee and its volunteer members provided input to the Wisconsin Legislature concerning each of these bills, and traveled to Madison to testify at hearings.

* 2016: For the first time, the WITU Youth Camp reached our goal of 20 campers, who represented our 21 chapters.

* 2017: Generous supporters donated nearly $15,000 to the Council’s Friends of Wisconsin TU grant program in 2016.

* 2017: The Council and members continue to advocate for an increase in the trout stamp fee, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative fund, and a periodic review of high-capacity wells and anglers’ ability to cross railroad tracks. Meanwhile, we continued to advocate against not pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes and splitting the DNR into two agencies. We also actively sought changes to a proposed inland aquaculture bill.

* 2017: Organizers embark on an ambitious plan entitled Trout Unlimited Central Area Restoration Effort for Sustainability (TU CARES). This plan called for funding and managing the Central Sand Hills Ecoregion in a manner similar to TU’s Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TU DARE) program.

* 2017: The Council’s Friends of Wisconsin TU grant program provides grants for six chapters. The Wisconsin Clearwater Chapter received $2,000 for maintenance of prior projects. The Antigo Chapter received $2,000 for a DNR brushing crew. The Central Wisconsin Chapter received $2,000 for the Wild Rose habitat crew. The Marinette Chapter received $1,000 for a habitat crew for the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forests, The Wild Rivers Chapter received $1,200 for a habitat crew for the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forests. The Wolf River received $2,000 for the Antigo habitat crew.

* 2017: The Council’s annual banquet continues to grow in popularity and fundraising success. The 2017 banquet raises $21,000.

* 2017: The Council and its members strongly oppose new bills threatening to cut the Stewardship Fund from $9 million to $2 million. We also opposed bills that would change dredging laws to the potential detriment of coldwater resources. Meanwhile, we supported the idea of a statewide moratorium on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).


* 2018: The Council strongly advocates for changes to several bills that would remove protections for isolated wetlands. Our efforts led to various compromise amendments.

* 2018: The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has begun the process of creating a Statewide Inland Trout Management Plan. Currently, no inland trout management plan exists, so this new plan will support the existing efforts in the department. The stakeholder group includes a TU member from four regions of the state.

* 2018: The Council’s Advocacy Committee outlined its conservation policy objectives for the next year, and reauthorization of the state’s stewardship program tops the list. Other priorities include protecting groundwater and surface water resources, increasing the trout stamp fee, and fully funding natural resource agencies and critical related programs.

* 2018: Council volunteers teach 839 kids how to tie a fly at the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo near Poyntette. As always, Bob Haase organized the high school troops.

* 2019: The Council continues to advocate for an increase in the trout stamp fee and reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. Wisconsin Trout Unlimited is proud to be a part of “Team Knowles-Nelson,” a consortium of more than 50 different groups advocating for a 10-year reauthorization of Wisconsin’s iconic public lands initiative at current funding levels. Meanwhile, the Council joins various hunting, fishing, trapping and conservation groups to form an advocacy coalition called “Sportsmen for Wetlands.” The goal is to advocate in a non-partisan effort to protect, restore and safely manage Wisconsin wetlands.

* 2019: The Council’s Northeast Region chapters and Friends of Wisconsin TU approve $45,800 to support the work of DNR LTE habitat crews for the summer season. The program continues to be huge success, with many miles of streams receiving habitat work each year.

* 2019: Larry Mann of Hayward Flyfishing Co. takes 10 veterans from our Wisconsin veterans programs on a guided bass-fishing trip. The State Council paid for the lodging for the crew and some of our chapters provided support.

* 2019: Council volunteers teach 929 kids how to tie a fly at the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo near Poyntette.

* 2019: Generous contributors donate $18,000 for Friends of Wisconsin TU. The Council approved grants supporting the northeast stream crews, Nichols Creek, Stumle Creek and stream repairs in Vernon County.

* 2019: The Council hosts a “Partners Paddle” on the Bois Brule River that includes U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin.

* 2020: The Council’s annual fundraising and awards banquet, with TU CEO Chris Wood in attendance, nets nearly $25,000. Dan Wisniewski is awarded the Council’s Lifetime Achievement Award. He passed away a short time later.

* 2020: The Council and members continue to advocate for reauthorization of the Stewardship Fund and support an increase in funding for county conservation staff and a pilot flood reduction project in Ashland County. We supported a bill which streamlines the permitting process for wetland, stream and floodplain restoration projects. However, the bill would have streamlin ed the permitting process for any “low-risk dam.” We felt that any new obstruction to free-flowing water should be given greater scrutiny than the bill’s general permit. We worked with our partners at the Wisconsin Wetlands Association and several legislators to have this language removed.

* 2020: The Council’s Watershed Access Fund helps secure property on the South Branch of the Oconto River.

* 2020: The Covid-19 Pandemic leads to social-distancing guidelines and the elimination of gatherings, leaving the Council and its chapters to cancel or postpone most activities.
By Kyle Siehers

When I first laid eyes on the spot, it was like an oasis in a desert. I had found it after searching through hundreds of yards of shallow riffle. My ankles felt like they were about to give out, but my heart was racing. I had seen a handful of small brook trout, none over six inches, and many too small to eat the spin- ners I was using. The spot that had stumbled upon was sure to give up the biggest brookie of the day. What happened next was at once exactly what I expected, and like nothing I could have imagined.

A perfect spot

The spot this fish called home was a spot you just knew would hold a fish, just not this fish. Everyone would expect the biggest fish in the river to be in the 8-foot-deep plunge pool below the riffle but steep rap- ids upstream. A pool that deep would remain cool enough to with- stand the sometimes luke warm temperatures of even the hottest summer. The depth was also excel- lent for holding brook trout. The rocks upstream provided an abundance of food and oxygen. This picture-perf- ect spot was so close to the home of the legendary fish, however. He chose to live elsewhere.

Downstream from the murky depths of our fish’s suspected haunt, the river widened and became quite shallow. Just as the river began to row ever so slightly, there was a small island. The smaller braid along the back side of the island was inconsequential. The other side, however, was where one had a chance to observe the fish at de- fined existence.

The stream in the vicinity of the island showed signs of bending. Not enough to notice at first, but if you stopped and looked up or downstream you were amazed at what you couldn’t see. Because of this slight bend, and perhaps some per- fect combination of rocks and boulders, there was a spot on the far bank that had some depth to it. It wasn’t soaking- ly deep compared to the six-to-ten-inch riffle extending up and downstream as far as you could see. 16 inches was all the water this fish needed.

I can picture the fish now. The image in my mind couldn’t be clear- er. It was a small fish, about six inches, fighting doggedly, with its fins touching my legs. And this fish was not just big, but truly gigantic. It’s a fish so big that if you were ever to try to catch it, you’d first have to dump it down at their feet. Even then, some may ac- cept it as food, or as a prize taxidermy, or even burglarizing a fish from the state hatchery.

This was a big fish. It was a buddy, an eyewitness with a firsthand account, may choose to believe it was a carp instead of a brook trout to avoid a lifetime in a mental institution. Indeed, this fish was no ordinary big fish. This was not a fish of a lifetime. It was more. It was a fish that would immortalize your name in history. The picture of you holding this fish would spread like wildfire across the internet. It would be talked about in diners and dive bars, fly shops, and farmers markets. This was a fish that incited sleepless nights, and endless daydreams.

A NICE BROOKIE, AND POTENTIAL MEAL FOR A GIANT BROWN

A love of brook trout

Brook trout were my first love. Far prettier than they had any right to be, they came in all shapes and sizes. I was looking for a heart, at first sight. The first trout I ever caught were wild, native brook trout. The first fish I ever landed on a fly of my own creation, or any fly that mattered, was a brook trout. Their enthusiasm in the take was an addiction to which there was no overdose. As long as I live, I don’t foresee myself burning out on catch- ing brook trout.

Part of the reason brook trout still hold a special place in my heart is their size. In my part of the world - a 10-inch brookie is a quality fish, with fish over 12 inches being big ones, and any- thing 14 inches or better being a re- al trophy.

When compared to various other species of fish, it may seem silly to get excited by a 10-inch. A 10-inch small- mouth, while fighting doggedly, is considered a lit- tle guy. A 10-inch isexciting for the opposite reason, as you almost never catch them that small. If you caught 10-inch wallers you would re- move in and move to a new location. Brook trout are fun that way. I am just as much in awe of a 10-inch brookie as I am of an 18-inch small- mouth, or a 30-inch pike.

As the fishing continued steadily up- stream, passing only long enough to throw a cast or two at fishy looking cover. Some casts produced minis- cule brook trout. Most turned up nothing. This section of stream was turning out to be worth a lot less ef- fort than I was putting into it. Most of the stream was too shallow to hold fish. Riffles broke up in midsummer were devoid of life. Even the log jams producing depth and cover were often fistless. Still, I never gave up hope. I knew that my efforts would surely be rewarded with a quality brook trout. Somewhere, somehow, I knew it had to happen. The brookies I had been catching that day were fun, but at the end of the day they were nothing more than promising up- and-comers. That is why I could feel the adrena- line coursing through my veins when I latched on to fish that would end up haunting me. I was excited by the promise of a quality brook trout living here. I had this feeling of certainty that I would catch a fish here, and that it would be the fish I was searching for. The spot just looked too good to be empty.

In addition to the depth provided by the bend and the boulders, the river had piled up some old storm damaged wood near the bank. The dogwoods and alders anchored the logs in place. Some had their up- stream ends on the bank while their downstream ends reached bottom. Others were wedged so that they were held just below the surface. A log or two had their upstream ends tucked tight to the bank while their downstream ends were hung up in the bushes.

Over top of all this wood grew a dogwood, providing shade and over- hand flip would be all the cast I would allow for a retrieve across the front of the wooden labyrinth. My first cast was right on the money. About halfway through the retrieve, when the spinner was just about to be swept under the leading edge of the wave, a brook trout struck. I couldn’t have scripted it any better. This was the quality fish I was searching for. The fight was short and uneventful, until it wasn’t. Just as the fish was beginning to exit the depths and climb the shallows of the sand bar that I was standing on, I saw the impossible fish.

The brook trout at the end of my line was fighting valiantly, flashing and thrashing all the way. The last moment before the fish lost the depth resulted in a dark shadow charged. It took a swipe at the brook trout, trying to eat it, but the spinner was just hanging open, forced to stop short. The fury with which it changed direction splashed was something else.

Thankfully I was already on my knees in anticipation of landing the brook trout but also not sure if I could have remained standing after such an event. I was frozen there, shak- ing, with my mouth hanging open. The splashing of the brook trout in front of me, still firmly attached to my line, snapped me out of my trance.

I unhooked and released the brook trout, and sat down in the sand. By now my fishing partner had broken the silence with the ques- tion that I already knew the answer to. Of course already knew. We both knew. We were both standing right there from start to finish. How could we have missed it? We sat there replay- ing the scene out loud for the next ten minutes.

“Was that a?”

“Had to be a brown.”

“Big do you think it was?”

“Sigh” “...Big...”

“Biggest brown I’ve ever seen. Pike aren’t that golden brown.”

“Yeah and carp don’t have spots like that, on the contrary...”

“Are there even carp in here? Never mind, doesn’t matter. Wasn’t a carp. No way.”

“Hey! There’s a brown.”

“Nothing else it have be.”

We concluded that it had to have been a brown trout trying to eat the brookie I had on the line. I hadn’t gotten the best view of the ordeal. After all I had been kneeling to land the brook trout and the water splashed in my face altered my view of everything after that point. Ben had been standing the whole time, and as we later found out, he had seen the color of the fish, and the spots the size of dimes, I hadn’t caught much of the fish’s retreat, but Ben had made note of stones on the riverbed to help us estimate a measurement. The biggest brookies I had seen were spaced wider than two wading boots were long. Almost two and a half in fact. Measuring our wading boots when we got home showed that one boot was thirteen inches long. Two and a half boots came out to thirty two and a half inches.

Remembering we only got a rough estimate of the fish size we concluded the fish was a minimum of twenty-eight inches long. There was a real possibility the fish was larger. It could well have been in the low-to-mid thirty-inch range.

What to do next?

For the next few days it seemed that the fish was already talking about us. We both had dreams of it. We talked about how would we re- turn to try for it again. Do we wait for the next generation to grow? Do we turn to try for it again? Do we turn to try for it alone, or did we need to fish togeth- er what we had started together?
BOOK REVIEWS

The natural world and the Bois Brule explored in three books

By Duke Welter

Our local library has, until very recently, been closed, and our home bookshelves are bare but the landscape is alive and well, as documented in three recent books. Our own wanderings and treks on the Bois Brule River are the innermost circle, but two should be of interest for the breadth of their focus on Wisconsin’s natural world, and the Land of the Bois Brule, and some of the presidents and the poets and the fans of the Bois Brule River and its unique history and culture.

Afield: Portraits of Wisconsin Naturalists, Empowering Leopold’s Legacy, Vol. 1, by Sumner Matteson

One of the unexpected joys of reading over the last several pandemic months has been Sumner Matteson’s book about Wisconsin Naturalists. At over 200 pages, it’s not a quick read. But if you call our state’s outdoors home and are interested in learning about it, this book deserves your attention. Matteson has spent his career as a DNR naturalist, writing on several major species restoration efforts, and started collecting material for this book 40 years ago. He interviewed naturalists, many now long dead, gathered their biographies, papers, and journal excerpts and gleaned more materials from their publications. The writing is excellent, and interspersed are pieces from other sources, from Aristotle to Barry Lopez, to augment the main subject. I always fold up the lower corner of a page to bring me back to a rich thought or well-turned phrase. In some chapters almost every page is folded up.

Some names will be familiar: An interesting one is John Warren Noyes, who in 1893 owned the cabin in the Boundary Waters, “Listening Point,” a few years before his death in 1902. Stories of Frances and Frederick Hamstrom, legendary prairie chicken researchers in the 1920s, are really tremendously focused in their work, like George Becker who gathered research on every fish species in the state over 25 years for his “Fishes of Wisconsin,” considered the best survey on the topic in the nation. Or the Rev. Sam Robbins, ornithological leader with a ruffled ear for bird-songs, who walked his 1930s with cedars as he walked outdoors with binoculars in hand. It’s interesting to compare the table of contents with a map of the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame, two lists with many overlaps.

Others are endlessly curious about everything: a subject may be a wildlife biologist assigned to make sure game numbers are enough to keep hunters happy, but when he walks into the woods, he is simply along the Green Bay shoreline he is noting every snake, fungus, animal, bird, insect. My husband and I were there for the evening to stargaze; I’ve known a few of these folks, and the books treasured in those pages comport nicely with my impressions and adds richness to their stories.

These are not all professional naturalists. There is room for self-taught urban prairie restoration expert Laurie Otto, for Bad River Chippewa Band leader and long-time teacher of nature, and Soil Prof. Francis Hole, who sang the praises of Antigo Silt Loam and helped make it our official state soil. We wonder how many of us even still sing the “Antigo Silt Loam Song” he wrote and performed for anyone who would listen?

Reverence is regularly a topic of Matteson’s interviews with his subjects, but it’s a mark of the man as well, writing from papers or letters. For many of his subjects, the wonders and order of nature can only be understood with an underpinning of reverence. The range of sources of that reverence makes another interesting aspect of this book.

One subject who contributed richly is the late LeRoy Lintereur, DNR wildlife biologist in the Oconee Valley, Ga., who was there every spring for 25 years, charting the avian arrivals and departures and foe what he termed a “heirloom” of Aldo Leopold’s essays. When a developer logged off 300-year-old hemlocks, Lintereur considered it an “ecologic crime shouting to heaven. Damn, when we have to bring down this obliterative, we have it in our power to do a bang-up job in a hurry. Now, just like that, with one single blow, we can lessen our fellowship in the land.”

Lintereur was dismayed at the filthy water of Green Bay before the Clean Water Act took effect, and at the loss of irreplaceable resources. His journals sometimes speak with frustration at human’s overuse, thoughtlessness and greed. One entry captured the essence of his life: “To have written with this bite, would he have obtained the reach he has?”

It should be in every high school and college library in the state, where it could in spire other young people with curiosity about the natural world. I’m pleased to hear there is a second volume.


Boys of the Brule

The Bois Brule River has long been iconic in our state’s lore: The lit-fishermen of Wisconsin’s highest claim to fame, the Au Sable Boys of Michigan, built estates and hosted presidents, and some of the Cleaver County will never be the same. The Boys of the Brule is a gem. It should be in every library in the state, where it could increase appreciation of internecine disputes should they be brought to the surface. It’s a book you can’t put down without it evoking that of Aldo Leopold’s essays. When a developer logged off 300-year-old hemlocks, Lintereur considered it an “ecologic crime shouting to heaven. Damn, when we have to bring down this obliterative, we have it in our power to do a bang-up job in a hurry. Now, just like that, with one single blow, we can lessen our fellowship in the land.”

Boys of the Brule by Ross Fruen

The Brule is a well-loved and vanished river, with its fishing, rapids, lodges and scenery. Many other Wisconsin rivers are wild(ish) rivers, like the Wolf, Prairie, Mecan, Namekagon, Flambeau, Wisconsin, Popple, all of which have their fans and river keepers. Even hard-pressed ones like the Wisconsin, Kickingpoo and Milwaukee do. We only revere those closest to wild, or do we? I wonder how many of us even still sing the “Antigo Silt Loam Song” he wrote and performed for anyone who would listen?

It is a book that we could use some fact-checking, perhaps by some of the participants. One of the BOB members mentioned that he was a member of the 1963 Boy Scout National Jamboree and World’s Fair in New York, N.Y. The 1964 World’s Fair was in New York and the 1964 Jamboree was in Valley Forge, Pa. I know because I was there. It’s a little thing, perhaps, but when I observe that I wonder about other recitations of fact which are new to me.

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When Things Happen: A Guide to Natural Events in Wisconsin, By Randy Hoffman

Several of my long-time angling and hunting buddies have this quirky fascination with species other than that which we target in our outdoor endeavors. They stop casting to marvel at the warblers in the streamside brush, or quit walking up pheasants to watch a swirl of migrat ing waterfowl overhead. That’s ok. I keep fishing or follow my dog while they are distracted. This book is for them.

For 40 or so years, Randy Hoff man has been one of our state’s professional and most peripatetic naturalists, working for the DNR’s Bureau of Endangered Resources (the folks you support with your eag le, badger or wolf license plate). Phenology, the study of coinciding events in the natural world, gives us plenty of clues to cyclic happenings, weather or climate changes, and the like. Hoffman is perfectly equipped to assemble a book like this. He’s seen hundreds of species and helped establish many of our State Natural Areas, and he’s kept records of the species he’s exam ined. The extended period of observations and his wide-ranging knowledge and skills make this book a must to many subspecies of outdoor observers.

His self-published book breaks the year down into 36 day-periods and reports on the natural phenomena you can observe in each. Lengths of days, meteor showers, bird and insect arrivals and departures, herpetic activities, plant activity, fungi emergences, mating and spawning activity are each covered on a success. The sheer number of observations — for birds alone he has recorded at more than 400 sites over 40 years, from northern hemlock forests to his back yard in Wau nakee—could be overwhelming, but interspersed with them are little es says in detail on dozens of topics. He consistently refers to information from a network of accomplished observers around the state, professional and otherwise, and to reports and observations from regular ly published sources like the Passenger Pigeon, the long-time newsletter of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Alien earthworms, seasonal fluctuations in migrations, expanding citizen study of dragonflies, and reasons and ways to support conservation are all well covered.
On ravens in the Northwoods in February, for example, he writes, “While many species are struggling to find food, yet this one doth thrive.” The common raven displays an exuberance that seems to defy the season. They are in preparation mode for courtship and anything goes. Observers in the north should spend time just watching these highly intelligent and creative birds. They have been seen swimming in the winds, making quick turns, complex displays, dropping stones and other foot gadgets while in flight. On the ground or in trees, they conduct tug-of-war games with leaves and twigs, hang by one foot or their bill, roll onto their backs, feed on food, and play various games, January and February. He is a master of description whether he’s talking about names of butterflies, snakes or anything else.

When I heard about the book, I was intrigued to see if it would cover anything else. Reading Hoffman’s book just after Matson’s first volume, one can’t help but think the former would be a perfect subject for volume two. They’re birds of a feather, if I may coin a phrase.


**Update from Washington, D.C.**

**By Taylor Eiderkerbusch, TU Great Lakes Organizer**

Despite Congress and state house meetings spending much of the last few months responding to COVID-19, there are still several very important conservation bills making their way through the U.S. House and Senate. The Great American Outdoor Outdoors Act (S. 3422) (GOA) addresses the maintenance backlog on public lands and ensures full, dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a program that received reauthorization last year and has been a topic covered in previous editions of Wisconsin Trout. If passed, GOA would appropriate the full $900 million annually allocated to LWCF in addition to providing $1.9 billion annually through fiscal year 2022, as well as the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Indian Education accumulating maintenance backlogs on roads, trails, facilities and historic structures.

GOA has already been passed out of committee and could see a floor vote in the Senate as early as June.

Second, America’s Water Infrastructur e Act (S. 3591), this year’s version of the biannual Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), has also seen movement through the Senate in recent weeks. This bill includes a number of vital Great Lakes provisions, including reauthorizing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) at $350 million, funding Asian carp defenses and addressing toxic contaminants like PFAS. Trout Unlimited hopes to see both of these bills passed and signed into law before Congress breaks for their summer recess and the upcoming election.

**Does your fishing car have a TU license plate yet?**

Support Wisconsin TU and get your Wisconsin TU license plate now. Go to www.dot.state.wi.us/drivers/vehicles/personal/special/trout.htm

**Watershed Access Fund: obtaining public access**

During the Spring of 2020 funding of our Watershed Access Fund, along with donations from Oconto Metro and Marinetree Green Bay chapters, the Wisconsin Stewardship Fund, Oconto County and Oconto County Conservation Clubs, allowed acquisition of a key parcel bordering the South Branch of the Oconto River in Oconto County.

This acquisition is important for northeastern Wisconsin trout anglers because it will greatly improve access to the South Branch below Menominee Falls and provide a put-in point for those wanting to float the lower South Branch.

This recent acquisition continues the success of the Watershed Access Fund, providing public access to important trout waters in all areas of Wisconsin.

Thanks to all the donors for the contributions that made this purchase possible.

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**Here is my contribution of $100 or more to the Wisconsin Watershed Access Fund**

**Make your check payable to Wisconsin Trout Unlimited**

MAIL TO: Kim McCarthy
736 Meadowbrook Court
Green Bay WI 54313
TU CARES’s public outreach in the Central Region

By Tom Lager

TU CARES (Trout Unlimited - Central Region) is conducting outreach in the Central Region to minimize negative impacts on trout populations by maintaining beaver control efforts to address concerns raised in the beaver management plan. In 2019, TU CARES chapters achieved our stretch goal of raising $29,000 to support Limited Term Employee salaries working on the Wild Trout Team of the DNR’s Trout and Salmon Management Program. The details of these efforts and the volunteers supporting them are now available.

The Wautoma highway department did a wonderful job with the project and worked with the DNR’s Brad Betthaeuser for permitting. The Yoocape Project plan to revitalize a 40-year-old section of the West Branch of the White River was conducted by Shawn Sullivan and Steve Devoli (DNR Wild Rose Trout Habitat Management Team). The main goals are to 1) improve available habitat for trout spawning, juvenile trout nurseries and adult trout, 2) bank stabilization and 3) increase accessibility for fishing and other recreational uses.

The Lake Drive culvert is scheduled to be replaced later this year to enhance trout passage and water flow through the road crossing. The project for this culvert was funded by a $25,000 Community Foundation of the Fox Valley Grant obtained by TU CARES. The Wautoma highway department did a wonderful job with the project and worked with the DNR’s Brad Betthaeuser for permitting.

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Scott Bahn prepared and submitted an Embrace-A-Stream Grant request to partially fund the estimated $160,000 cost. Other TU funding sources are being explored with TU CARES chapters including Central Wisconsin, Fox Valley, Frank Horrigan, and Shaw-paca, as well as other TU chapters within Wisconsin and Illinois. Additional grants being explored are from the DNR River Restoration Grant and Trout and Salmon Management Program for removing beaver management for the purposes of trout and salmon management. The Trout and Salmon Management Program for removing beaver management for the purposes of trout and salmon management. The project for this culvert was funded by a $25,000 Community Foundation of the Fox Valley Grant obtained by TU CARES. The Wautoma highway department did a wonderful job with the project and worked with the DNR’s Brad Betthaeuser for permitting.

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Driftless Angler

Keeping a business alive while keeping a community safe.

By Mike Jurain and Curt Rees

“Mat,” Geri said with tears in her eyes, “What have we done? We are so screwed.”

It’s August, 2004 and Mat Wagner and his wife Geri Meyer had just purchased a building on Main Street in downtown Viroqua. Geri recalls the weather being unbearably hot, with highs above 100 degrees, Mat and Geri had moved across the country with two small boys and were preparing to open a fly shop and guide service here in the Driftless Area of southwest Wisconsin.

For two solid weeks before they opened, Geri and Mat had been fishing the local spring creeks and had not caught a single trout. Panic and fear could have overtaken them, but the community came to their rescue. This would set a precedent of the symbiotic relationship between their business, the Viroqua area, and the trout angling community.

Let’s move to Wisconsin?

Before coming to Viroqua, Mat and Geri met in Taos, New Mexico where Mat guided and managed a fly shop and Geri ran a French bistro. They met through mutual fly fishing and learn techniques and skills needed for our narrow, tree-lined spring creeks. They had purchased the building and officially started their business without ever having wet a line in local water, so not catching a trout in their first two weeks was terrifying. It would have been understandable for them to just take jobs in the private sector and squelch the dream but help arrived in the form of Driftless legends, John Behlke and Bob Blumreich.

John, the creator of the pink squirrel and local guide Bob, a local guide, helped clue them in, and to put aside their Western ways of fly fishing and raise thousands of dollars to support local youth angling and outdoor initiatives. This is an all-day event, where each member of a four-person team is allowed to have one fly for the day. If the fly is lost or needs to be replaced, the team must re-tie, contributing to the official score of the team. There are a limited number of teasers that can participate, and preference is given to youth anglers. Any team having a competitor under the age of 18 is an automatic winner. The rest of the teams are selected at random drawing. There is a fun energy among the people this event brings together, and it wouldn’t happen without Pete and the support of Driftless Angler.

Fly shop built on relationships

The Driftless Angler is always available to help trout fisherman. “It’s a relationship,” emphasizes Mat, and they can provide a wealth of information to anglers. If you walk through their doors, use their bathroom, make fun of Mat’s hair, and then ask for a top stream destination, it’s possible you will be sent to the East Fork of the Kickapoos or just down the road to the TUDARE improvement project on Shizite Creek. It is a business after all, so if you venture into any fly shop, support them. Be kind and polite of course, but also buy some tippet, floatant, or a couple of recommend flies. Information may flow more freely if you invest in them, they will invest in you and help you have the best possible experience on the stream.

Hire a guide?

Hiring a guide is another way to invest in a fly shop, but I personally think the angler benefits much more than the fly shop. I learned to fly fish on Arkansas tailwaters and the trout don’t seem to care about bad casts. Trying that same approach in the Driftless was a completely different matter. Tangles, lost flies and monologues of swear words grossly outnumbered the trout caught in an outing.

And just like Behlke and Blumreich helped Mat and Geri figure out trout fishing here, Mat did the same for me in 2008. I hired Mat for a guide trip during their initial shop years and he taught me more in four hours than I would have learned in four years on my own. “We caught fish that day, but more than that, Mat saved me years of frustration,” emphasizes Geri. “It was as if he and Pete had read my mind and put the pieces of water, where to place a fly, and how to fine tune my drift.”

Always working on getting more women into the sport

Geri has focused on providing more opportunities for female fly anglers. The Driftless Angler has a line of women’s outdoor clothing and equipment. Geri used to get a lot of eyerolls when attending vendor seminars when she asked about more focus on equipment for female anglers. Thanks to her persistence and more recognition from gear vendors, the availability of fly fishing equipment for women grew.

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They shop now carries full lines of women’s apparel in a variety of sizes, unlike many other fly shops which may only have a more limited selection. Their commitment to their clients and expanding the sport across demographic lines is admirable and runs counter to an efficient focus on one part only of the demographic. As you will see, that is the type of people they are—community centered, not profit centered.

One-fly tournament

The Driftless Angler supports the development of the next generations of anglers with their support of Pete Cozad’s Driftless One-Fly Tournament. For the past six years, Pete has organized the “One-Fly” to raise thousands of dollars to support local youth angling and outdoor initiatives. This is an all-day event, where each member of a four-person team is allowed to have one fly for the day. If the fly is lost or needs to be replaced, the team must re-tie, contributing to the official score of the team. There are a limited number of teasers that can participate, and preference is given to youth anglers. Any team having a competitor under the age of 18 is an automatic winner. The rest of the teams are selected at random drawing. There is a fun energy among the people this event brings together, and it wouldn’t happen without Pete and the support of Driftless Angler.

Diversity and fly angling

The Driftless Angler stands out from most fly shops across the country as Mat and Geri have a very diversified guide staff. They currently employ five full time guides and four part-time guides, including Pete Cozad, a fly fishing guide. I wonder if you would consider hiring me?” Mat joked sarcastically, “Being the experienced business people we are, we took his note, checked one reference (a very positive one) and hired him,” and Pete has been with them since the beginning. Pete had previously guided for people from the Chicago area and also had Minneapolis contacts. He helped lend credibility to the fly shop and build their initial business.

MAT LOVES WHAT HE DOES. CAN’T YOU TELL?

Clients have come from Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago, but they also include visitors from South Africa, Japan and Great Britain.

Wisconsin Trout, page 23

DRIFTLESS, from page 13
We struck gold with Marinette County. We were stunned to see that it had 56 trout streams. The map and stream information covered two pages and was a mass of blue squiggles showing all of the streams.

We weeded through the book. We struck gold with Marinette County. We were stunned to see that it had 56 trout streams. The map and stream information covered two pages and was a mass of blue squiggles showing all of the streams.

Two young anglers embark on a late 1970s camping trip in search of Marinette County’s bountiful trout waters.

By Rick Larkin

In the late 1970s I discovered a publication entitled “Wisconsin Trout Waters — Maps — Complete List for 58 Counties,” published by the Clarkson Map Company of Kaukauna, Wisconsin. It cost six bucks, was atlas-sized, and had maps of all Wisconsin counties where trout streams were present. The map of Marinette County had a graphic listing the name of the trout stream, the amount of trout water present, trout species present (“x” for stocked, “n” for native), and stream and fishing gear included our fly rods and waders, two spinning rods, a tackle box, and a Styrofoam cooler with about a hundred dollars. Jeff was a little unsure about the flyfishing part of the plan as it pertained to dinner. We were loaded for bear. This pile of stuff would be jammed into Jeff’s tiny yellow Toyota wagon.

Where oh where to go? So much water! So many streams! We agonized. We studied the map book. The North Branch of the Pike River had 29.5 miles of Class I water with native brook and brown trout. We would start there. Next, we decided to explore the Wausaukee River near Athelstane as one of the Marinette County brochures I looked at near Athelstane as one of the Marinette County brochures I looked at described territory. The countryside, a large section of forested land in the north woods before and the north woods afterwards, was part of the plan as it extended into Marinette County. We were stunned to see that Marinette County had 56 trout streams. The map and stream information covered two pages and was a mass of blue squiggles showing all of the streams.

We didn't just jump in the car and start driving. We really didn't know where Marinette County was exactly, as we all lived in the Milwaukee area. Nobody had a family cottage up there and nobody had ever camped there, or had ever driven there. It was new territory for us. Our journeys northwest usually stopped in Green Bay. In those days, Packer tickets were easy to come by and cheap, sometimes free, in the dark years between Suicide Squads and the French press had not yet been invented. We left camp and drove a short distance to our chosen “spot” on the Pike. We were armed with fly rods and Muddler Minnows, hoping for big hook-jawed browns. To say the water was a little high was an understatement. It was a raging whitewater torrent. We thought that being swept to our death was not a distinction and every year we could think of. We tried them weighted and un-weighted. Then we tried Woolley Buggers. Jeff went back to the car for his spinning rod and trusty night crawler rig. No dice. Not even a bump all morning. The Pike soundly defeated us.

We eventually came to less menacing water and began swapping our Muddler Minnows in the Pike. It was mildly stained at this point and everything looked real fishy. We did the downstream wet fly swing. We swung and swung and swung some more. We moved upstream and swung even more. We changed flies to some streamers, stripping through the current in every way we could think of. We tried them again and again. The fish were feeding and the fishing was good.

At first light, we had peanut butter toast made on the camp stove and instant coffee. Granola bars and the French press had not yet been invented. We left camp and drove a short distance to our chosen “spot” on the Pike. We were armed with fly rods and Muddler Minnows, hoping for big hook-jawed browns. To say the water was a little high was an understatement. It was a raging whitewater torrent. We thought that being swept to our death was not a

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All this for six bucks?

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over sausage and mushroom pizza and Schlitz. We now turned our attention to the Pemebonwon. It was already past two in the afternoon and the Waupaca would have to wait for another expedition. After finishing lunch, we drove north on 141.

The Pemebonwon and its branches flow in a mostly easterly direction towards Pembine. Given the condition of the Pike, we thought smaller water upstream might be best. On 141, we turned west on a gravel road with heavy woods and undergrowth on either side. We began looking for access points to the Pemebonwon.

The map showed all county and township forest land located in a maze of county and poorly marked gravel roads. Based on the trout map book and the county road map, the stream should have crossed the gravel road we were on at two points. We couldn’t find either. Then, we stopped the car and soon heard the unmistakable sound of rushing water coming from either side of us. We walked in one direction and found the Pemebonwon, or what we thought was the Pemebonwon, flowing under a large culvert, obscured by tag alders and a jungle of thick undergrowth. We had located crossing number one. We walked in the other direction about a couple of hundred yards and found the same scenario for crossing number two with the same thick undergrowth. Both branches of the stream were very small at this point. We could barely see the water. A light rain was starting to fall, making things even more fun.

Just how in the hell were we going to fish this? Jeff was not much of a fly fisherman and was fresh from his fly-fishing defeat at the hands of the Pike. He grabbed a spinning rod and the worm cooler. “I’m sitting on the road. Probably be a hole by the culvert,” he said. He was probably right. Still, despite everything — the culvert, “he said. He was probably the road. Probably be a hole by the

I rethought my approach and got down on my knees. I tried to slowly and quietly crawl to a more open riffle a few yards ahead. I could now see a couple of nice brookies lazily finning in the pool below the riffle. I tried a short roll cast with my last Wulff. Best cast so far. They ignored it. They also ignored the next 10 casts. Then they ignored the last Adams. It started to rain a little more. I tried a wet fly and swung it through the pool. No dice. Multiple casts in the most beautiful brookie-filled pool in the most magical forest I had ever seen produced nothing. The gnomes and elves must have been laughing as they arced.

It rained a little harder as late afternoon turned into a long early evening. I was keeping my eyes open for any hint of forest fire activity. I continued. I looked at my watch. I had been fishing this short stretch for more than thirty minutes. I was surprised it was only eight o’clock and I figured I had about fifteen minutes left before I needed to start walking back to the car.

In times of desperation, desperate measures were in order. I had lost that, too. During my failed casts

Very soon, a chunky male Brookie inhaled my fly/worm comb and was hauled in with little ceremony. In my hand, the trout was as beautiful as the little magic forest stream he just came from. He was a very dark green, almost black along the top which accentuated the spots and wormy patterns of the fins. His white belly was as white as the sand in the stream. The white-tipped orange and red fins were brilliant and intense in color. It was perhaps the most beautiful fish I had ever seen.

He was also for dinner, so in my creel he went.

The rain intensified as I slogged back to the car. I emerged from the woods and found Jeff sitting in the front seat of the Toyota, drinking a beer and listening to the radio. I tapped on the window. He opened it a crack. “How’d ya do, flyboy?” he laughed. It was not his first beer. “Got one,” I said defensively. “Haah!” he laughed, “kept a limit and let a bunch go!” he hooted. “Even got out my fly rod and ran a wet fly through the culvert and got a couple more!” That really hurt. Still, we had enough for dinner.

There was no rain, even harder. “Gonna let me in?” I asked, and he did it was through any further taunting. We now was thoroughly soaked and drove back to the campground with the heater on full blast so I could dry out. On the highway, we stepped for gas and I bought two of those emergency clear plastic ponchos for a back up.

We drove back to our camp site to make the fabulous fried trout dinner we talked about during the planning stages of the trip. Cooking dinner was slow going with the rain interfering at every step. We deployed George Patton’s leftover ponchos for a buck each. Those brookies tasted so good. Soggy fried potatoes are not nearly as tasty as dry fried ones, we all agreed. Beer never tasted better. Kings don’t eat this well.

No photos survive of the two young men in clear plastic ponchos eating a late night trout dinner under the safety of a lantern light in the June rain. Despite a night of wet sleeping bags, a leaky WWII canvas tent, bugs, general physical misery, and generally uncooperative trout, I always smile when someone brings up the Pemebonwon. Some- times, on the rare occasion when I am eating a fried trout dinner, I think of George Patton’s leftover ponchos for a buck each. Once on the highway, we had enough for dinner.

The trout didn’t come easily on this soggy trip to northeastern Wisconsin, but it was a trip they’ll never forget.
MONSTER, from page 9

We had posed so many questions and answered them all. We had ranked our tactics in order of confidence from highest to lowest. We had even tossed around the idea of contacting the local fisheries biologist to see if he was interested in electrofishing that section to see if we could turn up this fabled fish.

We went back for another attempt. I think we were reluctant to return to this fish because we were subconsciously afraid of the inevitable heartbreak we would suffer when the fish never materialized. We were so afraid of seeing the fish again and not catching it that we never even tried. Or maybe it was just to know a fish of that caliber existed. Maybe we never returned out of respect for a fish that lived and that old. Whatever the reason, that fish remains the greatest fish there (n)ever was.

IS THERE A PRETTIER FISH THAN A BROOKIE?

For a time, thousands of brook trout spawned in the Portage County creek known as the Isherwood Lateral.

But the trout habitat built there by Donald “Justin” Isherwood became the subject of a bitter dispute with local authorities, and in June 2017, just weeks before a scheduled court hearing, those authorities brought construction equipment onto Isherwood’s property to dredge the creek and destroy the habitat.

The court case took years to make its way through the legal system that could affect other farms. They never showed actual harm had come from the project, according to a court finding.

The habitat itself was nothing more than dozens of old Christmas trees staked to the creek bed. The woody material acted as cover for trout, and the stream’s gravel bed was a place for them to lay their eggs. It worked. By 2016, thousands or even tens of thousands of trout were spawning in the creek.

In February 2018, the judge ordered the drainage district to pay Justin’s legal fees and reimburse him for the cost of restoring the trout habitat. Instead, the drainage district appealed the case. They lost the appeal, and appealed again to the state Supreme Court.

When the Supreme Court chose not to take the case this year, it was over.

In a brief phone interview, Cieslewicz said he had “nothing to say” to WPR about the conclusion of the case.

“I feel like we’ve come out of proportion last time; you’re not going to do it again to me,” Cieslewicz said.

Lynn said she and her husband have presented their plans to the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection for permitting. They’ve been collecting Christmas trees. With any luck, they’ll be out this summer putting the trees in and staking them down. There are still some trout left in the stream, and they’re hoping they can help ensure that there are more each year.

Thank you to Wisconsin Public Radio for allowing us to publish this article.

Trout stamp program seeks art entries

By Darrell Toliver, Trout Stamp Coordinator

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is happy to announce that the annual Inland Trout Stamp Design Contest has been reinstated and is now open and accepting entries! The winning artwork will appear on the 2021 Inland Trout Stamp.

Judging for the top 10 pieces of artwork for the Inland Trout Stamp Design Contest will take place in an open session in September 2020. The top three pieces of submitted artwork (that is, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd-place entries) may be displayed at external venues. Please be sure that your submitted artwork conforms to the specifications outlined in the “2021 Wisconsin Inland Trout Stamp Design Contest Rules.” Also, please note that entries should not be protected by any covering such as acetate or celloglue. You may use an acetate envelope for protection during mailing, as long as this envelope can be easily removed.

For a copy of the 2021 Inland Trout Stamp Design Contest Reproduction Rights Agreement and the 2021 Inland Trout Stamp Design Contest Rules, please contact me. Read over the instructions carefully. All paperwork can be included with your artwork during mailing, and you may mail entries and paperwork for Inland Trout Stamp design contests in the same package if you wish. Entries must be delivered or postmarked by August 2, 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact me at DJTSOK@aol.com or 651-269-8804. Good luck. We look forward to seeing your entry.

Isherwoods win Supreme Court case

A farmer created trout habitat and authorities tore it out. After years in court, he won the right to rebuild.

By Rob Meuter, Wisconsin Public Radio

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CLEARING OUT THE ISHERWOOD LATERAL

In June of 2017, just weeks before a court hearing, the Portage County Drainage District dredged the woody debris that Justin Isherwood had placed in the Isherwood Lateral. Although it was mostly old Christmas trees, the woody material provided brook trout cover and the stream’s gravel bed was perfect for spawning. By 2016, thousands of trout were spawning in the creek.

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Wisconsin Great Lakes Stream Restoration Program update

By Chris Collier, Great Lakes Stream Restoration Manager

This has not been the spring or summer any of us were imagining. Despite all that has happened, I’m still encouraged by all that TU has been able to accomplish nationally, regionally and locally. From encouraging #ResponsibleRecreation to dedicated members and volunteers making sure policy and project goals are not forgotten, you have shown that coldwater conservation doesn’t stop.

When the pandemic came to a head in March, I was interviewing potential summer interns. We were not sure if we would be able to safely have interns in the field this season, but fortunately some dedicated staff members developed protocols for working during the pandemic. We were able to bring on two interns, Rachel LaPorte from Wisconsin Lutheran College and Hannah Kieler from the University of Washington (a Wisconsin local home for the summer). They started their internship the first week of June (I’m actually writing this update around a campfire in Marinette County after their first day) and will be helping us inventory road-stream crossings to identify fish passage barriers and help with other summer projects.

Speaking of those other projects, we still have a full workload with the U.S. Forest Service. Eight culverts creating fish passage barriers are scheduled to be replaced this summer in partnership with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, reconnecting more than 20 miles of trout habitat. We’re also working on a remnant logging dam removal on the North Branch Oconto River near Wabeno and I will be excited to share updates on that project in the future.

While our work with the U.S. Forest Service is moving full steam ahead, we have felt the negative impacts of working during a pandemic. In 2019 we hosted a project tour that brought together more than 40 local road managers and officials to learn about our road-stream crossing projects. We were planning to host another tour this year in the northwest part of the state, but after postponing the original tour date, we have decided to cancel the event to err on the side of caution. Our plan is to host the tour next year, but keep on the lookout for updates as we explore new ways to spread the word about better stream management.

But it’s you, our dedicated members and volunteers, who continue to make TU one of the leading voices in conservation. Through these difficult times you’ve continued to support TU and make sure coldwater conservation isn’t overlooked. This is what makes TU such a successful organization and it makes me proud to work with you on these important efforts. I sincerely applaud your efforts and can’t wait until we can gather in a room again to share stories, victories and project updates.

See you on the water (at least one rod length apart, for now)!
Like in other chapters, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our activities. We cancelled our final round of Bar Flies, our fly-tying gatherings at local watering holes, we cancelled our spring camping/ fishing weekend and we cancelled our annual picnic in the event. Additionally, we have moved to virtual board meetings. We will follow TU guidance to decide when we will resume events.

I want to thank Bob Moss for his years of service on our board. Bob found it necessary to resign from the board recently, and he will be missed. He did great work as a membership chair, reaching out to new members when they joined TU. Best wishes to Bob. Jason Nye has stepped up to take over the membership chair position. Thank you, Jim.

Due to cancellations of classes for the remainder of the school year, our Trout in the Classroom program in Sauk County had to be cut. Nate Nye and his crew from the Wisconsin Trout Unlimited chapter in the schools and retrieved the fingerlings, which were then released into local trout streams. Hopeful, TIC will be back next year.

Thanks are in order to the hosts of our Bar Flies events. Tumbled Rocks Brewing, Oooga Brewing and The Ballroom all made us welcome this past year. Two of the events were cancelled due to poor support. We are already planning to expand Bar Flies next year, with more events scheduled for the fall and winter.

We were in the process of arranging with the DNR for some mowing along Bear Creek on the Fargen entrance trails. Nate Nye at the DNR is helping us with the details, but if all goes well later this season we should see some new paved paths along the stream. This should make access a lot easier in the late season and it will also help keep woody vegetation from growing into any fishhold.

Now for the really exciting news about Bear Creek. Nate Nye forwarded us a copy of a recent DNR report on the Bear Creek watershed. This report documents an extensive survey of the watershed done in 2018, but incorporates data from 2013-2019. This is a new type of report for the DNR, focusing on the entire watershed. At 43 pages, it is lengthy and thorough. We plan to post a downloadable copy on our website, and the DNR also has a copy on their website once they complete migration to a new website.

I am happy to report that Nate is recommending reclassifying Bear Creek upstream of Highway N from Class 2 to Class 1. That was one of our goals when we started BCHIP almost 10 years ago and it feels good to have achieved that goal. Here is a summary of the report’s recommendations:

Management recommendations include:
- Retain current fishing regulations on trout streams in the Bear Creek watershed.
- Maintain current trout classifications for Biser Creek and Croal Creek.
- Maintain current trout classification for Bear Creek below County Highway N.
- Reclassify Marble Creek and McCarville Creek from Class 2 to Class 1.
- Reclassify Bear Creek upstream of County Highway N from Class 2 to Class 1.
- Develop a brown trout stocking in Croal Creek.
- Expand easement and fee title ownership when possible to provide additional habitat management and public access opportunities. Expand NRE acquisition boundaries during master planning to facilitate more acquisition.
- Many, many people have contributed to our work on Bear Creek, and to see this success is a testament to those efforts. To all of you, we say thank you.

—Mike Barnicki

Antigo Chapter

We hope you all are well and safe, Bob, what the last few months have done. The changes and cancellations have hit us all, and our chapter is no different. Our annual banquet in March was delayed and now is cancelled for this year. We have returned ticket money to people who wanted their banquet ticket money back. We will organize for next spring’s banquet after Christmas.

We also canceled our annual June Kid’s Fishing Day. We did place about 700 brook and rainbow trout into Remington Lake by May, so the kids will have trout to catch this summer.

The culprit replacement project involving our chapter and the Moose Lake Association, on Crestwood Road near Plathom, is complete. The previous culvert was a hindrance to water flow and fish movement.

The June work day with area TU chapters and the DNR on the Evergreen River was cancelled. Maybe we can reschedule it later.

We have talked to a landowner with property on the East Branch Eau Claire River to help enhance access to the river for fishermen. We will keep you all informed on our progress.

That’s all for now. We hope things get better for all of us soon.

Go fishing!

—Scott Herrnitsch

Central Wisconsin Chapter

Central Wisconsin Trout Unlimited has had to make many painful decisions since the COVID-19 pandemic struck. In the interest of the health and safety of our members and guests during the pandemic, we reduced and canceled our 2020 events, scaled back and protected against holding in-person events, which was typically our busiest time of the year.

We had to cancel the Don Harlan III Fly Fishing School. We look forward to continuing this important tradition that has introduced many people to fly fishing for more than 40 years. We will offer the students who signed up last year a priority registration for 2021.

We canceled our April, May and June programs, and we also canceled our stream habitat days for the rest of the summer as time goes by and we are able to evaluate the risks.

We have also canceled our annual banquet for this fall, opting hopefully for an event in 2021 which will celebrate the chapter’s 50th anniversary.

We held our first virtual board meeting in May using the Zoom platform. It’s a different experience, but at least we were able to get together, check in on each other and present to chapter affairs. We are planning on using this forum for the foreseeable future until we go back to live meetings. Thanks to Tom Meyer for championing the idea and hosting it for us.

We were able to make a donation of $12,000 to the DNR to support stream restoration work in 2020. Hopefully, they will be able to get their crews in the field this summer. If not, we are sure that the fish will be.

We have encouraged everyone to get out and enjoy Wisconsin’s fine fishing. We have heard that many more people than usual are getting out and that there are many families on streams and rivers are introducing their children to the sport, which is a great thing for fishing.

We welcomed a generous $1,000 donation from the estate of Harlan Beutler. His daughter, Beth Lind, noted that the money be dedicated to stream improvements on the Me- can River in Waushara County. Harlan was a lifelong fly fisherman who loved the sport and the Mecan. His family is also selling Mecan River property to the DNR to ensure that the resource is preserved with access for all. We can’t thank them enough.

We also welcomed two new members of the chapter who joined under TU’s new program offering a one-year free membership to essential pandemic workers. The program appears to be very successful.

One bright spot has been the CWTU’s River Keepers. Bob Joz-owski reports that the WAV beat split is working.

The Central Wisconsin TU River Keepers enters its 20th year of existence. Who would have imagined the challenges that we would be facing today. In past years, the dissolved oxygen kits we collected from each monitoring team the previous November would have been refur- nished and distributed to each team at our April board meeting so they would be ready to start the first monitoring session to collect May data. Then the COVID-19 lock- down hit us in March and our usual plans began to unravel.

But the key to success in any endeavor is persistence and maintain- ing a certain degree of flexibility. While our collected DO kits could be refurbished with fresh chemicals to provide a season’s worth of water sampling in the usual time frame, distribution to the team captains needed to be delayed during a dis- tempting procedure and social dis- tancing plan could be implemented. In addition, UW-Extension and the DNR advised that monitoring activities should be postponed until further notice.

While the month of April came and went without any of the normal preparatory work, the first few weeks in May allowed us time to dis- infest DO kits and allow pick up or hand delivery of each kit to the team captains. In CWTU River Keepers are made up of either single-person or single-household members, so social distancing should not be an issue for all, so the chapter is able to continue monitoring and restrict the team from functioning as usual. In the other cases, some thoughtful consideration of travel isolation (i.e. separate cars), and distance must be maintained on stream parameter measurements can serve the same function.

Standard WAV procedures re- quire each team to make six mea- surements once per month at their assigned stream location. Those pa- rameters are water temperature, transparency, dissolved oxygen, stream flow, macroinvertebrate (aquatic animals) collection and identification, and habitat assessment. If team members can be as- signed one or two of these specific tasks, social distancing guidelines can still be observed.

Officially, the start of the 2020 monitoring season is targeted for June, but many of our 27 teams con- sisting of 75 volunteers measuring 36 stream sites have already begun their work. After two months of self- quarantine and cold spring weather to boot, we are raring to get out on the streams to monitor.

Oh yeah, fishing is pretty good, too.

—Stan Cichowski
**Coulee Region Chapter**

The pandemic led to the cancelation of our new three-day retreat, our spring fly shop meeting, and presentations. Sadly, several other events we sponsor or volunteer for have been cancelled, like Driftless 1 FLY, Coulee Driftless Fly Fishing, and SEWTU at Escofa Park and the Youth Outdoor Fest. It is disappointing that these outreach events didn’t happen, but we will prepare to be back with them all next year. Kristin Welter is our new leader. She is thrilled to have us at the top of her chapter. Fred has been a board member and consistent volunteer and will do well in helping coordinate all we do. Many thanks to Rick Kyte and Cy Post for serving as co-presidents for the past years.

In other board business, we debated the calls for a new board leader and we are thrilled to have this at the top of our chapter. We developed our committee structures to focus our work and also elected a new chapter president. Fred Spudeman is the new Coulee Region leader and we are thrilled to have him at the top of our chapter. Fred has been a board member and consistent volunteer and will do well in helping coordinate all we do. Many thanks to Rick Kyte and Cy Post for serving as co-presidents for the past years.

In the future, our chapter is focused on creating new groups and projects to TUDARE and county-led projects combine. Three are being carried on by TUDARE’s Paul Krahn and more than 400,000 so far.

Our neighboring TU chapters have been great backers of these Driftless projects, and we thank the Blackhawk, Southern Wisconsin, and the four Illinois chapters: El Dorado, Donnelly, Kewaunee, and Gary borchers, to replace fence stiles to allow safe access to stream and mosey the property of landowner fences and relationships. We welcome tips on the Coulee Region so we can place them on our work list. If you see a bad stile, email Dale Jonson at dalejonson@gmail.com. We also formalized a process to welcome new CRTU members with a personal email, phone call, or letter from three members of our board. We have learned a lot from several of our board members participating in TUs online community forum and recommend other chapters do the same if you have not used this resource or started at tucommunity.org.

This season our chapter is supporting several new projects that have been carried on by TUDARE and county-led projects continue. Those are being carried by TUDARE’s Paul Krahn and more than 100,000 so far.

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**Frank Hornberg Chapter**

In March, members from the UW-Stevens Point Fly Fishing Club, along with the Frank Hornberg Chapter, taught seven girls from the Wisconsin Rapids Scouts BSA Chapter 9118 how to tie a zebra midge and a woolly bugger. Here, Heidi Oberstadt shares her technique.

**Fox Valley Chapter**

The world, as we know it, will change as the Covid-19 pandemic fades. Reflecting on the sport of fishing, I worry that the majority of our active members, like me, are going. Where are our future leaders? What should be done to broaden our membership? It is easy to look at our active members, like me, and see that the majority of them are older. I worry that the majority of our membership will not be around to take up the mantle of leadership.

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**Green Bay Chapter**

With the Covid-19 pandemic disrupting our typical lives, Green Bay Trout Unlimited was not an exception. First, we cancelled our April Annual Meeting/Guest Speaker meeting. Our presenter was scheduled to be Retired DNR Biologist Dave Vetrano. Dave was to speak about the Driftless Area. This is also the meeting where we elect our last three chapter members for open seats, but we have to put it off until later. Our meeting season lasts from September through April and our chapter by-laws require six meeting per year. This gives us some time to prepare for our next meeting season and whether we do it in person or online. We subsequently get out and support our local fly shop, Fall Line Outfitters, in Stevens Point. The economy has had a tough time the last couple months and we need a fly shop in our community. Let Craig know we care.

**Frank Hornberg Chapter**

In March, members from the UW-Stevens Point Fly Fishing Club, along with the Frank Hornberg Chapter, taught seven girls from the Wisconsin Rapids Scouts BSA Chapter 9118 how to tie a zebra midge and a woolly bugger. Special thanks to Craig at Fall Line Outfitters in Stevens Point for hosting the event.

When we can get back together safely, we want to work on the Tomorrow River above Lake Meyers Road. Several downed trees are obstructing the flow of the river. Check our website or Facebook for upcoming details.

Please get out and support our local fly shop, Fall Line Outfitters, in Stevens Point. The economy has had a tough time the last couple months and we need a fly shop in our community. Let Craig know we care.

—Doug Erdman

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Chapter News

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter

Like with other chapters around the country, Kiap-TU-Wish activities have been greatly curtailed by COVID-19. Luckily for us, late last year our chapter overhauled our communication tools. Under the guidance of member Chad Borenz, we upgraded our website at www.kiapwtush.org. We can now post documents, such as reports on our ongoing efforts, fun architectural projects, or even our award-winning newsletter (RIP-RAP) going back to 1987. We also changed our official chapter email address to info@kiaptuwish.org.

In a move that has proven fortuitous, the chapter also subscribed to Zoom, which was used to hold our last scheduled chapter meeting in May with a presentation by Nate Anderson and Kasey Yalalay from the DNR on habitat projects and easement acquisitions. We also have conducted two board meetings, contradicting that adage that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks.

We had two members step down from the board this spring, Maria Manion and Perry Palm. We thank both for their service to the chapter.

Luckily we were able to fill these seats with Dustin Wing and Scott Stewart. Welcome to both.

Over the past six years, under the guidance of Maria Manion, our newsletter RIPRAP has developed into a quality publication — artistic, informative and fun to read. Along with her publishing team, Maria has provided our membership with a much-anticipated monthly splash of good news. Maria is stepping down as editor, and chapter member Ed Constantin will take over the reins of RIPRAP. He hopes to carry on with the excellence Maria has established.

Ed reported that the 2020-2021 editorial season for the Kiap-TU-Wish newsletter RIPRAP will continue to span the months of September through May and will include five editions starting in September, and continuing in November, January, March, and May.

The schedule change will allow contributors an extended window for article submissions prior to each continuing and will also allow for riprap exemplars associated with the printing of the newsletter.

RIPRAP provides Kiap-TU-Wish members with valuable information on chapter and local events, updates from chapter members charged with carrying out stream-related activities, plus informative articles and human-interest stories.

During the 2020-2021 season we hope to engage additional contributors, expand on the expertise of chapter members, and offer more navigation of board information. Questions or proposed articles and other subject matter can be forwarded to Ed at Ecus6060@gmail.com.

Our chapter’s monitoring efforts have continued, even during the pandemic.

The Willow River is one of several local rivers and streams that we monitor for water temperature and other variables. In April of 2016, temperature loggers were installed at three locations. One is located at the USGS water flow monitoring site roughly ½ mile downstream from Little Falls Dam. The other two are located roughly ½ mile upstream from the Trout Brook Road bridge. One is in the main branch and one is in the Race.

The 2018/2019 data retrieved from the logger in the Race showed a minimum water temperature, in January 2018, of 32.84 degrees F, which is about as close to freezing as you can get. The maximum water temperature, in July 2019, was 76 degrees.

From what we’ve learned, this large temperature variation does not bode well for trout populations. The water is too cold in the winter and too warm in the summer. An important thing to note is that this data was collected after the Little Falls Dam was removed.

In 2014 it was determined that the Little Falls Dam needed to be replaced. By the fall of 2015, the drawdown of Little Falls Lake was complete, and the dam was removed. This allowed the river to flow freely until early 2020 when a new dam was constructed, and Little Falls Lake began to fill in. As of today, the lake is nearly 100 percent full.

As our monitoring continues, it will be interesting to see if the dam, and the impoundment behind it, will affect the water temperatures.

Harry & Laura Nohr Chapter

Due to the pandemic, the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter held our board elections via email. All other meetings have been postponed or cancelled.

In early May the Fenimore Trout In the Classroom brown trout fingerlings from the Fenimore Middle School into Borah Creek, just north of Lancaster. The event was filmed live for the Fenimore Middle School Facebook page.

Kurt Meyer releases the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter’s Trout In the Classroom brown trout fingerlings from the Fennimore Middle School into Borah Creek, just north of Lancaster. The event was filmed live for the Facebook page.

Regarding stream work, our contractor started moving equipment to the Dieter site in early May, with plans to move to the Stanek site after finishing work there.

The Dieter project is now complete. There was some bank shaping and rip-rapping to be done, as well as installing the remaining in-stream structures. The final shaping, seeding and mulching is complete, as well.

We did a tremendous amount of brushing and invasive tree removal on this property, as well as the adjoining state land, the Snowbottom Natural Area.

This helped improve access for fishing on both properties. The stream length was seeded with grasses, per the Natural Resources Conservation Service specs. The landowner and the Department of Natural Resources State Natural Areas manager are working together to maintain both sites in grasses and forbs.

The remaining instream structures, shaping, seeding and mulching will be completed as soon as weather allows. We put a temporary cover crop on the disturbed ground, which is coming along nicely.

This project also incorporated three wetland scrapes, which already have frogs, geese and ducks utilizing them.

The Zadrazil property project, our largest ever, is slated to be done over the course of two years. Located immediately downstream of the Stanek site just off County Highway Q, it includes the final 700 feet of Six Mile Branch before it flows into the Blue River and approximately 7,500 feet (1.4 miles) of the Blue River. We hope to start after the Stanek property is done. There is a tremendous amount of soil that needs to be removed from this site.

—Brian Larson

NEW KIAPI BOARD MEMBERS GETTING THEIR FEET WET

New Kiap TU Wish Board members Dustin Wing (left) and Scott Stewart collect temperature data on the Trimbelle River at the chapter’s County Highway W project site.

summer. Our work project chair Paul Kruse said the DNR is using “Badger Bounce Back Guidelines.” The Antigo DNR has informed us they have not been allowed to do field work yet and are looking forward to working with us next year.

Our Veterans’ Service Program has been put on hold. Tight Lines Fly Shop, where we hold our meetings, currently has a three-person maximum admittance. Furthermore, we want to make sure our veterans’ safety.

Myself and GBTU education chair Dave Ostanek have discussed the likelihood of canceling this summer’s youth events, including our popular Annual Kids’ Fishing Day.

This pandemic has made us wonder how our Annual February Conservation Banquet may be affected. It is our premier fundraising event and depends on revenue raised to effectively carry out our mission. Several months back we created a Supplemental Fundraising Committee. Over the next few months, we will reconvene to address this situation.

For more GBTU Chapter information, please visit our website at gbtyu.net or check our social media on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Stay safe, everyone.

—Adrian Mesher
going forward.

The Kiap-TU-Wish monitoring team has a busy schedule during the April-October 2020 period. Chapter members have deployed 30 temperature loggers in five local rivers, to evaluate the impacts of stormwater runoff, hydropower facilities and climate change, and to assess the ability of our stream restoration projects to improve temperature regimes. Of the 30 loggers, 21 are deployed year-round. Numerous water samples are being collected and analyzed on several streams, to better understand watershed impacts on water quality, as well as the ability of restored river sections to reach improved water quality.

To complement stream temperature and water chemistry data, two weather stations are being operated, providing data on air temperature, relative humidity, dew point and precipitation. The Kiap-TU-Wish also continues to provide financial and volunteer monitoring support for USGS operation and maintenance of the Kinnekim River flow gaging station. See the data at https://waterdata.usgs.gov/wi/nwis/UV?site_no=05342000. Weather stations are being operated, relative humidity, dew point and water quality. team has a busy schedule during the April-October 2020 period. Chapter members have a busy schedule during the

Prior to the full effects of COVID-19 we held 17 brushing days over the course of the off season starting back in November, wrapping up with a final workday on March 27 to take advantage of some late season snow. With close to 100 bluebird nesting boxes in place at various restoration sites, a call was put out at the end of March seeking volunteers to close up the nest boxes as they were out and about hitting their favorite waters for some early season fishing.

The status of the ever-popular late July/early August stream surveys, when chapter volunteers assist the DNR with their stream shocking, and also remains up in the air due to COVID 19. Chapter Habitat Coordinator Randy Arnold encourages members to engage with the local community and conduct their own stream surveys using hook and line techniques. The teachers and students did an excellent job, and 36 healthy trout were placed on one of our local streams. A short video about the mApp can be found at: https://www.mobileh2o.com/anglerscience/mApp. WiseH2O mApp monitoring in 2020 has been delayed by a combination of COVID-19 and difficulties encountered in development of the iPhone version of the mApp. Nonetheless, we are hoping that Kiap-TU-Wish anglers will still have an opportunity to monitor Pierce County trout streams and rivers for a portion of 2020. In addition, a broader Driftless Area roll-out of the mApp is anticipated this summer. Stay tuned for more details.

Chapter members have been busy with their students digitally. Two classes trained the custodians to look after the fry in their absence in hopes that they can release the fish when they return in the fall. This is something that has not been attempted before and we are curious to see how big the fry get by September.

There hasn’t been much going on in our neck of the woods. Without being able to meet, it’s been hard to stay busy with our 2020 plans. Our streams and rivers were hit very hard this spring, and due to that lots of repairs are needed. Luckily, some of our members have been going out on their own to brush areas that need attention. Thank you to Herb Twins and Larry Dobbert for organizing those workdays.

We were looking to start workdays again in June. With some restrictions being made, we think we can do this very safely. On a sad note, we lost a very dear friend and member Dave Lechelt back in March. Dave was a huge asset to our chapter. He was always the first one to engage new members and welcome them. He would always have a great story and was always there to lend a hand. A memorial bench was made in Dave’s honor and will be placed on one of our local streams. R.I.P Dave. You will be missed.

Hopefully things will begin picking up soon. With the first half of the year being very hard on everyone, I hope things will get back on track sooner than later and we can have a better second half. I hope it’s not just wishful thinking. Lakeshore wishes everyone to be happy and healthy through these trying times.

—Myk Hranicka

The Marinette County Chapter will hold its annual fundraising banquet Monday, August 3 at Embers 1871 in Peshtigo. Anyone interested in making a donation, helping or attending the banquet should contact Dale Lange at 715-582-1135. Doors will open at 5 p.m., with the auction and raffles. Money raised at the banquet will be used to cover the cost of this summer’s work projects in northeastern Wisconsin. 

—Dale Lange

On April 23 the science teachers from James Williams Middle School in Rhinelander and Terry Cummings released this year’s hatch from Trout In The Classroom into Gudegast Creek northeast of Rhinelander. Gudegast Creek is primarily a Class 2 stream with some Class 1 water, and it is on record for receiving domestic strain brook trout. Jeff Mosher and Zach Woik from the DNR facilitated procurement of our stockling license, getting eggs from the St. Croix Falls hatchery, and identifying the release location.

The Marinette County Chapter in opposing the Badger Minerals proposed sulfide mine in the Town of Schoepke in Oneida County. Our opposition was presented via a resolution from the chapter to the Oneida County Board.

—Terry Cummings

I hope everyone is healthy and safe. The past few months have been tough for all of us. I sadly share the bad news that former SEWUT President Ed Christie recently passed away. Ed was president of the chapter in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. As president he was responsible for guiding our early work at Rosenow Creek and Paraise Springs. Ed engaged our chapter with national figures, and he was active in teaching youth to cast and fish. My thoughts and prayers go out to the Christ family in their time of loss.

We have been unable to hold chapter meetings and now find ourselves transitioning into our summer months where we normally do not
Wild Rivers Chapter

As you can imagine, the Wild Rivers Chapter has been noticeably quiet during the pandemic. Dick Berge traveled down to Spooner recently to pick up Phil’s fly tying materials so he could put them to good use. Dick and I drove down to fish with Phil on the Chetek River, Phil’s favorite home river. Phil and I talked about his fishing trip and he apologized about sending his materials. Dick and I are scheduling guest speakers, because we no longer have the opportunity to view the presentations. We have the advantage of a webinar feature, we are hosting a master fly-tying class beginning in January, and we are seeking instructors. We have the advantage of a webinar feature, we are hosting a master fly-tying class beginning in January, and we are seeking instructors. We created winter activities, but we still have four to five months before the fall and winter seasons are here. Never fear, because board member and secretary Tom Sather launched a video interview series called “Two Tips, A Tie, & A Tune.” You can find Tom’s interviews on the Clear Waters Facebook page or our website at www.wcwtu.com.

Wisconsin Clear Waters

We are all experiencing a difficult period of uncertainty and anxiety about what is best for you and your family. Still, we will all get through this by being cautiously optimistic and weather this economic storm. As a past board member and the current president, I have jokingly stated that “I am going to keep the board into the 20th Century.” Unfortunately, we are in the 21st Century. However, the new elephant in the room, “The Pandemic,” has forced us to create and redefine how Wisconsin Clear Waters will operate currently and in the future.

When the pandemic hit, we adopted the guidelines set forth by local health agencies. The next step was to keep in touch with our members without direct contact, and here is where technology has become a vital partner during this pandemic.

Wisconsin Clear Waters added Zoom Pro with the optional webinar plugin. Our first zoom launch, we created a zoom board meeting. The next step is to keep the Zoom meeting going. The October chapter meeting utilizing the Zoom webinar feature was a great success and we plan to have a new instructor every week for six weeks. We will record the class, and you will have an opportunity to view the presentations on our website.

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Wisconsin Clear Waters mourns loss of Al Noll

In memory of Al Noll, Wisconsin Clear Waters has established the Al Noll Gilbert Creek Memorial Fund. The fund’s main objective is to continue with restoration projects on Gilbert Creek and to encourage fellow fishermen to respect and maintain Gilbert Creek’s healthy environment for current and future anglers.

Our next task is to evaluate what the future holds for the chapter, under this pandemic environment. We were fortunate that past Chapter President Bob Swanson established a rainy-day fund. These dollars were set aside for a “what-if” situation, and the ensuing chapter presidents have maintained the same practice. Well, that rainy day has become a monsoon, and because of the foresight of the previous chapter presidents, we are now experiencing a different, and perhaps a more positive future. It is possible that this pandemic will not have a negative effect on our sponsorships of Bluff Creek and Tichigan Creek. As the DNR is extending our sponsorship contracts by one year to offset these unforeseen times.

The board and officers are not sitting idle, as we are looking at where we can target chapter resources to prevent 2020 from being a lost year for conservation. We will get through this, things will return to normal and our love of fishing will continue. Fishing is a great activity while safely done.

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I hope everyone is doing okay. The beautiful greens of summer are finally here, along with birdsong and wildflowers. We hope you are getting to enjoy Mother Nature’s version of “live streaming.”

Congratulations go to Myk Hranicka, whose name was randomly drawn from those who submitted pictures of their projects. The current pandemic restrictions have forced the cancellation of all events planned for this summer. We will start planning presentations for our chapter as safety permits. Keep checking our website and Facebook page as we all wait this thing out. Stay safe, but get out and enjoy some summertime. Those white flies will be flying before we know it.

—Linda Lehman

### Wolf River Chapter

According to Tim Waters, the 2020 spring fishing was crazy good. His trout log shows that he caught 95 trout in the Wolf River, with 80 percent browns, 20 percent brook trout and no rainbows. Gray drakes turned the trout’s attention starting the spread of the virus. Work continues on restoring brook trout habitat on Nine Mile Creek. First, blown-down trees from the July storms had to be cleared from the “roads” to get back in there, as it’s a very remote location. Social distancing rules were adhered to for the very small group of chapter members, even during photo opportunities. More organized back in normal work, though the Nine Mile Creek are upcoming in July and August. Check out our Facebook page for more information or contact Andy Kiloren at akiloren@centurytel.net to sign up.

The Metallic Sulfide Mining Exploration Project Site, referred to as the Schoepe Site, has been very active, first with clear-cutting all the trees in May and then with the actual drilling beginning on June 1. Some folks from the White Lake area have been up there to see what has been happening. The trees with prayer ribbons were all cut down. The activity and protests have been followed by local news channels. I also heard about some successful brook trout fishing on Stockley Creek. Most of Schoepe Site land is enrolled in the Managed Forest Law program, which increases hunting and fishing opportunities in exchange for reduced property taxes for property owners. Please keep a trout log with dates, locations, and fish caught or not. Documentation is valuable.

—Laurie Zen Netzow

### Angling community asset

The Driftless Angler has a reputation of benevolence for giving back to the trout fishing community. The key contributors for Coulee Region Chapter events, the Coulee Driftless One-Fly Tournament and many other local activities. Many other trout organizations across the Midwest have benefited from their presents and donations to banquets and stream days.

### Pandemic impacts

As with other small businesses, the pandemic has drastically affected their daily operations and business model. They followed state and federal guidelines and immediately stopped all guided trips. They shifted to drive-up and mail shopping, and then quickly downscaled to just mail orders. In the first weeks of the shelter-in-place order, Mat continued to post daily fishing reports on the shop’s web page. Mat noticed that the pandemic resulted in many people suddenly having lots of free time to fish Driftless Area streams. While fishing is an appropriate way to exercise and avoid crowds of people during the shelter order, traveling hours from home to fish seemed to counter to the message of stopping the spread of the virus.

So contrary to a business focused solely on profit, Mat and Geri suspended the daily fishing report and wrote a very poignant article asking people to protect our streams and our local community by staying home, or at the very least stay local. This course led to some pushback on social media, but they have stayed the course to maintain their focus on protecting the Driftless Area community at this time.

As Wisconsin starts to reopen, the Driftless Angler has communicated with other fly shops to share best practices in serving their clientele in this new environment. Guides and clients will now have a different experience to keep all parties safe. Clients will need to arrive at the stream in their own vehicle and bring their own food and drink. Until more is known about how the corona virus spreads, it may mean that anti-bacterial wipes are needed when rods are exchanged.

The Driftless Angler, as of June 8, is now open again, but your fly shop experience will change to a “new normal” for now. Staff will assist and pick you up. The limits on the number of anglers in the store at one time. Although no legal requirement, do your part and wear a mask to protect the staff. The same buff or bandana that keeps gnat out of your nose on the stream can also be used to reduce any possible germs you might expel when in the fly shop or other place of business. Keep a respective distance of other anglers in the shop or on the stream.

### 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.

---

**Wolf River Chapter**

Wolf River Members Clearing Trail to Nine Mile Creek

Bill Livingston, Brian Biermier, and John Rose maintain social distancing while clearing blown-down trees off a trail to Nine Mile Creek.

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**Chapter News**

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Clean angling Q & A

On a typical day of fishing in southwest Wisconsin, I fish three or four streams, sometimes more. Do I really need to disinfect my gear after fishing each one?

The simple answer is yes. It is Wisconsin state law that you inspect and remove all mud, plant material, and water from your equipment prior to leaving a waterbody. We should continue the tradition of good sportsmanship that anglers are known for by protecting fisheries and the habitats that we frequent. New Zealand mudsnails have now been found in seven streams in Wisconsin and are notorious for being transported on the waders and boots of anglers from one stream to another.

Other invasives that detract from the fishing experience, such as wild parsnip, spread between popular fishing spots via seeds on wading boots.

How can I possibly remove all of the dirt from my waders and boots when hopping from stream to stream?

One simple way anglers can limit the spread of invasive species between streams is to carry a stiff synthetic scrub brush in your vehicle or pack. Before moving to another stream, take a minute to brush off your boots and waders, including the grooves, laces and tongue.

These actions cannot guarantee that you won’t transmit invasives to a new stream, but minimizing risk is key. If you wish to move thoroughly clean your gear, use a pump sprayer filled with clean tap water to rinse your waders and boots. AFTER you’ve given them a good scrubbing with a brush.

I have a trip planned out west this summer. Many of the rivers I plan to fish are infested with AIS. What should I do to prevent spreading them further?

While fishing out of state, if possible, plan to visit uninfested rivers first. Ask guides or shops which rivers are infested with invasive species; they will know.

After fishing an infested river, there is a high risk that you will spread invasive species on your gear! High-risk anglers should follow one of the three decontamination recommendations on the right side of the “Go with the Flow” chart soak gear in a mild bleach solution for ten minutes, freeze gear, or allow gear to dry completely for a minimum of five days after brushing off mud and debris.

Before leaving and upon returning to Wisconsin, it is imperative that you follow those same steps. Or, do as many others do: keep a pair of waders and boots AFTER you’ve given them a good scrubbing with a brush.

I refuse to give up my felt-soled wading boots. Felt is not the only culprit, and if I fall in a river, my spreading AIS on my felt-soled waders and boots?

The most important thing to remember is that felt takes a long time to dry and is difficult to clean, and often, disinfection solution does not fully penetrate the felt to kill invasives. This is why rubber is the better option when it comes to preventing the spread of invasives.

However, if you must use felt, you should use a pressure sprayer (like a small herbicide applicator) and a stiff-bristled scrub brush to clean the felt the best you can when moving between Wisconsin streams. Again, if traveling between states, having two pairs of boots recommended: one for use within Wisconsin, and another pair for use elsewhere.

What should I do if I see something suspicious in Wisconsin waters that I think might be invasive?

The best thing you can do is take a picture of the suspicious plant, animal, or algae and email it to River Alliance of Wisconsin (aewisconsinrivers.org) or your local DNR fisheries biologist for identification. DNR biologist and invasive species reporting information can be found at http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/report.html.

For more information contact the River Alliance of Wisconsin at 608-257-2424 or visit www.wisconsinrivers.org.

Council adopts mining resolution

Resolution in Opposition to Metallic Sulfide Mining in and around the Wolf River Area

WHEREAS, the mission of Wisconsin Trout Unlimited (WTU) is to conserve, protect and restore the coldwater resources of our state, and to support both our national organization and our local chapters in their pursuit of that mission; and,

WHEREAS, there are known metallic sulfide mineral deposits in and around the Wolf River area, and a foreign owned company has recently gained a license to drill exploration holes in the headwaters of the Wolf River, with the intent to locate an open pit metallic sulfide mine at that location. The Wolf River being one of the largest watersheds in northern Wisconsin, which passes through Forest, Oneida, Langlade, Menominee, Shawano, Outagamie, Waupaca, and Winnebago counties before emptying into Lake Winnebago, and ultimately Lake Michigan; and,

WHEREAS, the Wolf River provides a unique habitat for species of special concern such as trout and other freshwater fish, which would be negatively impacted by discharges into the water and;

WHEREAS, the Wolf River and its surrounding areas support a robust outdoor recreation economy and a thriving tourism industry; and,

WHEREAS, the potential impacts of the mine include long-term leaching of acid-producing wastes into the groundwater and the river which would harm sport-fishing and essential sources of drinking water and;

WHEREAS, the hazardous wastes generated by the mine would degrade water quality and present serious human health risks for the environment in Wisconsin, and knowing the fact that sulfide mines are the largest source of taxpayer liability under the EPA’s Superfund cleanup program and;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the State Council of Wisconsin Trout Unlimited strongly opposes metallic sulfide mining and urges the Wisconsin DNR, the Wisconsin State Legislature and Governor to deny a mining permit for any metallic sulfide mine in the Wolf River Watershed.

Dated this 12th day of May, 2020 Wisconsin Trout Unlimited, Inc.

By: Mike Kuh, its Council Chair

Donate to Wisconsin TU via Thrivent Lutheran financial

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. 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.

For more information contact the River Alliance of Wisconsin at 608-257-2424 or visit www.wisconsinrivers.org.
Please support Friends of Wisconsin TU in 2020

2020 has been another very active year for the Friends of Wisconsin Trout Unlimited habitat improvement program. This year eight different chapters have received grants from the program: Antigo, Blackhawk, Coulee Region, Fox Valley, Green Bay, Harry and Laura Nohr, Southern Wisconsin and Lakeshore.

Each of the resulting chapters received $2,000 grants. Much good habitat work will take place as a result of this year’s grants. Thank you to all of our donors who make the grants possible.

Providing habitat improvement grants since 1991.

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<th>Chapter</th>
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Here are our Friends of Wisconsin TU donors.

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The check is enclosed in the sum of $2,000.00. It is payable to Wisconsin Trout Unlimited for habitat crews in 2020.

$2,000 to Wild Rivers for habitat crew in 2019

$2,000 to Antigo Chapter for habitat crews in 2019

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

Friends of Wisconsin TU

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

$2,000 to CWTU for habitat crew in 2019

$2,000 to CWTU for habitat crew in 2019

$2,000 to the Lakeshore Chapter for Nichols Creek in Sheboygan County in 2019

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

MAIL TO:

Kim McCarrick
736 Meadowbrook Court
Green Bay WI 54313

Name

Address

City, State Zip

Phone #
By Tracy Hames and Erin O'Brien, Wisconsin Wetlands Association

A few years ago, on a warm and sunny July day, I paid a visit to Bull Gus Creek, a class 1 trout water in the Penokee Hills of Iron County. During my hike that day, I changed upon an area where the creek snaked through a fairly large sedge meadow wetland complex. I approached its sinuous channel thinking I could catch a nice photo of the wetland by standing in the creek. One step into the channel, however, brought me up to my neck in cold, cold water. Luckily, I’m an old duck hunter, skilled at keeping my gun out of the water. So the camera stayed dry.

Now this experience didn’t make me mad. It got me excited.

The trout habitat at this location on Bull Gus creek is about as good as it can be. The channel is narrow and deep, helping maintain spawning gravels. Grasses and sedges stabilize undercut banks. The water is cold, with groundwater levels at or near the surface. And it winds through a broad, well-connected floodplain with the bonus of abundant wetlands from terrace to terrace.

It’s a striking contrast to many streams I’ve seen across Wisconsin where the water may still run cold but the physical condition of the channel is highly degraded. Eroded banks, incised channels disconnect ed from adjacent floodplains, and once narrow streams that now run shallow and wide, are but a few examples. Elsewhere, water temperature and supply may be compromised.

All of these degraded conditions affect trout habitat, and all are tied to changes to watershed hydrology — in other words, how and when water moves through a watershed.

Restoring wetlands in the upper reaches of our watersheds and reconnecting streams to their flood plains is one of the best ways to reconnect channels that were once narrow, underutilized, approach to restoring the health of Wisconsin’s coldwater fisheries.

So let’s start by reviewing two very basic needs of trout and how healthy upper watershed wetlands and healthy floodplains help meet these needs.

TROUT NEED COLD WATER

We all know that we can’t have trout if we don’t have cold water. Because Wisconsin summers are so warm, trout-bearing, coldwater streams rely on upwelling groundwater. That groundwater supply also helps buffer the effects of warmed surface runoff entering streams. Most groundwater originates from sources above the ground, especially snowmelt and spring rains.

Upper watershed wetlands capture this melted snow and spring rainwater, slow it down and allow it to infiltrate into the ground. The ground, acting like a refrigerator, keeps the precipitation cool as it makes its underground journey toward the stream. Though the snowmelt may have entered the ground in March, it will likely not reach the stream until the heat of the summer when the trout need this cold baseflow more than ever. Loss of wetland storage, whether through drainage or development, disrupts this infiltration and subsequent summer baseflow.

TROUT NEED HEALTHY CHANNEL FORM AND HABITAT STRUCTURE

In many Wisconsin trout streams, healthy habitat conditions are characterized by deep and narrow channels underlain with gravel undercut banks stabilized by fibrous-rooted grasses and sedges, and woody debris and other features supporting aquatic invertebrates and adding to structural diversity. Complex watershed-scale interactions between water, geology, geomorphology and vegetation influence channel form and structure.

Wetlands affect channel form in two important ways, both related to the energy of flows.

When upper watershed wetlands capture and slow the flow of runoff, the energy of the runoff is reduced. But when upper watershed wetland storage is removed, water moves swiftly down through the floodplain, in addition of unnaturally large, short duration (flashy) runoff events. These high-energy, flashy events cause large amounts of erosion.

To accommodate these flashy flows, the channel must change its shape. Channels generally change their shape in two ways. One way is by digging themselves deeper into the ground. This is called incision, and is very common in trout streams across Wisconsin. Another way is by making themselves wider and shallower. This condition is more common in trout streams in the Central Sands region. As channels change their shape to accommodate flashy runoff events, they become increasingly disconnected from their floodplains.

When a stream becomes disconnected with its floodplain, the energy associated with the runoff stays in the channel. This increases bank erosion and downstream sedimentation, causing further disconnection of the channel from its floodplain. With each runoff event, conditions get worse, tributary channels become gullies, floodplain disconnection increases, erosion speeds up, downstream become buried in sediment, summer baseflow is reduced, bank habitat is lost, and the stability and complexity of the channel suffers.

Back to Bull Gus Creek

Remember the high-quality site where I went in up to my neck? Walk up from that site and you’ll find wetlands covering nearly 50 percent of the upper watershed, effectively capturing runoff and reducing the energy of the 200-250 inches of snow that falls there each winter. The large sedge meadow floodplain where I took a dip further reduces the energy of the water flowing from above. The combined energy reduction helps keep the channel stable, deep and narrow, which is great habitat for trout. It’s an amazing place, and one of my favorite landscapes in Wisconsin.

Connecting Hydrologic Restoration to Habitat Recovery and Resilience

I’ve spent much of my career protecting, restoring and managing watersheds and fisheries, but in recent years, I’ve focused much of my energy on protecting and enhancing wetlands. As we’ve learned, wetlands are critical to supporting healthy aquatic systems that we all depend on.

Wetlands capture and store water, integrate surface and groundwater, and filter contaminants, allowing healthy water to flow downstream. They also store carbon, through the roots and soil. Wetland hydrology allows these systems to persist even in a changing climate. Wetlands are also a key resource for community and ecosystem engagement.

In the world of wetlands, we talk a lot about connectivity and stepping stones to help communities move audiences and decision makers toward actions. Connectivity is a key to understanding the importance of wetlands to our community and ecosystem well-being.

I believe the challenge we face today is to ensure the health and resilience of our wetlands and our wetland-dependent communities. And I believe we can do it.

Now we’ve all worked on projects where the objective is to fix something that’s messed up at a given site. And we’ve all worked on projects where for one reason or another we just couldn’t get it done. At least I know I have.

One of the most important things I’ve learned from these experiences is that the more degraded the hydrology is upstream from a site I’m working, the harder it is to achieve self-sustaining restoration goals on site. So, after decades of careful attention, when I approach a restoration effort today, I always ask the same three questions:

• How did water historically move through this watershed?
• What’s changed over the years to alter that movement and how do those changes affect this site?
• What can we do to restore some semblance of historical water movement in a modern context?

The main point is that keeping your favorite fishing spot healthy may require work upstream. In some places, re-establishing wetland storage and infiltration and reconnecting streams to historic floodplains might give you the biggest bang for your restoration buck in the long run. This is especially important given the increasingly intense precipitation events we are experiencing in Wisconsin.

Because a hydrology-based, watershed approach to habitat restoration also helps reduce flooding and runoff and conserves soil, integrating these practices can further increase public investment and community engagement in your restoration work. Restoring watershed hydrology with these co-benefits in mind is the root of an exciting new collaboration between WWA’s and Trout Unlimited staff in Northern Wisconsin (see sidebar). We’ll have much more to report on this collaboration soon, so stay tuned.

Wisconsin Wetlands Association is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan, science-based organization dedicated to helping communities and decision makers understand how wetlands can be solutions to the water issues they face. Please visit our website for more information about wetlands, water sheds, hydrologic restoration, and how you can support our work.

BULL GUS WETLAND AFTER FLOODING

An upper watershed wetland in the Bull Gus watershed in July 2016, a couple of days after a historic event dropped more than 11 inches of rain throughout the region. This rain event caused more than $35 million in public infrastructure damage. Thanks to the thousands of wetlands like this capturing runoff, there was minimal damage in the Bull Gus watershed.
Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Wisconsin Trout Unlimited, Ashland County and many others have teamed up in the flood-prone Marengo River watershed of Northern Wisconsin to develop and implement a pilot watershed approach to hydrologic restoration.

Together, we'll be exploring opportunities to strategically improve upper watershed wetland storage and floodplain connection in order to sustainably improve fish habitat and passage, reduce flooding and protect vulnerable infrastructure.

The watershed approach being developed with this partnership is drawing much attention and support, with funding coming from sources focused on habitat, healthy forests, hazard mitigation, climate change and more.

Even the Wisconsin Legislature recognized its value, providing $150,000 toward the planning and construction of demonstration projects to show how upper watershed and floodplain wetland restoration can help address water management issues in light of increasingly strong storm events.

This legislation, 2019 Act 157, passed with unanimous bipartisan support before being signed by the governor. Both WWA and WITU lobbied in support of this bill.

For more information on this partnership, please contact WWA’s Kyle Magyera at kyle.magyera@wisconsinwetlands.org or TU’s Chris Collier at chris.collier@tu.org.
By Jeff Hastings,
TUDARE Project Manager

Despite most county conservation field offices restricted to limited staff at any one time in their offices, it looks like conservation will not be limited by the coronavirus disease. In the fall of 2018 TUDARE was awarded one of the largest conservation awards in Trout Unlimited’s history — a Phase II $9.2 million-dollar Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) award. I wrote the proposal with strong support from TU chapters that do work in the Driftless Area, as well as other partners wanting to contribute towards the matching requirements of the award.

The first successful RCPP, Phase I, covered just Minnesota and Wisconsin, Phase II was written to cover the entire Driftless Area. Because Wisconsin field offices and chapters were so successful in obligating Wisconsin’s $1.4 million share of Phase I, Phase II was written so that Wisconsin will be receiving even a larger share —$3.9 million. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding, like the first phase, will go through the local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field offices to agricultural producers.

The dollars will target coldwater stream conservation type practices in the Driftless Area, with priority given to streams with angler access. TUDARE developed a screening process with NRCS so that for a project to even qualify it must contain habitat for trout or nongame species and cannot simply be a bank stabilization project. In 2019 nearly 50 landowners signed contracts with NRCS for almost 16 miles of work, utilizing about a third of Wisconsin’s allocation of the award.

Tudare Unlimited Chapters, DNR fish habitat crews and county conservation field offices are working with private landowners where there is public access to cover most of the cost of the restoration projects. Ag producers sign up for RCPP and then reassign the EQIP payment over to the organization, with the understanding that the producers’ share of the access area will be paid for. Producers get projects at no cost, and the organization receives approximately 75 percent of the cost of the project through EQIP.

We have been doing projects like this for more than 20 years in the Driftless Area, but have had to compete against other funded EQIP conservation practices such as waterways, dams and barnyards. With these targeted RCPP dollars we are only competing against other stream restoration projects, with the best projects being ones with public access and habitat.

Even if your Trout Unlimited chapter does not do projects in the Driftless Area I would be glad to visit with you on how you can use EQIP dollars targeted for your county to help fund stream restoration projects. EQIP dollars can be used to clear brush, plant a buffer, remove log jams, install fish habitat and more.

We are grateful to WITU and the chapters that have donated to TUDARE. Even large awards such as this $9.2 million one do not cover administrative costs to run our programs.

You can contact Jeff at Jeff.Hastings@tu.org

TUDARE offering pollinator seed

We have again purchased about $5,000 worth of pollinator seed, all forbs, which are available for any coldwater Driftless Area stream project scheduled for this summer. At a rate of 3 ounces per acre and an ounce of common milkweed, it should give you an additional 5 to 10 seeds per square foot (typical seeding mix is around 40 seeds per square foot).

Although it will not replace your already planned seeding, it will enhance any riparian mixture. We have worked with Prairie Moon Nursery to identity a hardy pollinator seed mix to compete with other seed mixtures in the riparian zone.

Let me know what stream you are working on, how many acres you plan to seed and when you will need it. We’ll either mail you the seed or find a way to get it to you.

The enhancement mixture includes Purple Giant Hyssop, Great Indian Plantain, Rose Milkweed, Tall Bellflower, Sweet Joe Pye Weed, Great Blue Lobelia, Glade Mallow, Wild Golden Glow, Golden Alexanders and Common Milkweed.

Contact Jeff Hastings at Jeff.Hastings@tu.org

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