



Wisconsin Trout

Spring 2024

Sara Johnson passes

Sara Elaine Johnson of Salem, Oregon, died on February 3, 2024 three days after her 68th birthday from cancer and related health issues. Good friends were holding her hand on the final stretch of her life journey. She was born on the South Pacific desert island of Canton, which is now part of the island nation of Kiribati. She lived as a child in Kabul, Afghanistan, and moved with her family to Washington, D.C.

Before coming to Wisconsin to complete her undergraduate and graduate education at UW-Madison, she worked for National Public Radio as national training coordinator.

After working with UW-Madison's College of Agriculture and UW-Extension in natural resource policy and outreach, in 1993, she co-

founded and was the first executive director of the River Alliance of Wisconsin, a statewide citizen advocacy organization for rivers. Under her leadership the Alliance became nationally-recognized for dam removal and river restoration work, with the restoration of the Baraboo River to a free-flowing state being one of her most cherished achievements

She also was instrumental in a landmark settlement with Wisconsin Electric Power affecting 11 dams on the Menominee River system in Wisconsin and Michigan. This included the removal of three dams while providing environmental, recreational and economic benefits in the basin for the life of the license.

See **JOHNSON**, next page



SARA ENJOYING ONE OF HER FAVORITE STREAMS: BLACK EARTH CREEK

Friends of Wisconsin TU grants awarded

2024 is looking like it is going to be a very good year for habitat improvement work in Wisconsin. The Friends of Wisconsin TU has awarded 10 grants totaling \$25,000 for the 2024 grant season.

Grants have been awarded to the following chapters for a wide range of projects:

- Antigo Chapter: Funding to help hire a habitat crew for the Antigo area.
- Clear Waters Chapter: Funding for a project on Traverse Valley Creek.
- Coulee Region Chapter: Funding for a project on Mormon Coulee Creek.
- Fox Valley Chapter: Funding to help hire a habitat crew for the Central Region.
- Green Bay Chapter: Funding for

a habitat crew in the Antigo area.

- Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter: Funding for work on the South Branch of the Kinnikinnic River
- Lakeshore Chapter: Funding for work on the Onion River.
- Laura and Harry Nohr Chapter: Funding for work on the Blue River.
- Oconto River Chapter: Funding for a Lakewood habitat crew.
- Wild Rivers Chapter: Funding for a habitat crew that will be part of the TU Great Lakes program.

Chapter grant were \$2,500 and cover a very wide geographic area of the state. Each chapter receiving a grant has a requirement to match the dollar amount, so each grant brings a minimum of \$5,000 to the projects.

The work season is just about ready to begin. It will be exciting to see the completed work that will most certainly make the public trout fishing in Wisconsin better. Thanks to all of the chapters for their habitat improvement efforts. The State Council is pleased to be able to support chapter work through the Friends of Wisconsin TU program.

Watershed Access Fund update

The Watershed Access Fund completed its most recent acquisition project on the Kickapoo River and Hay Valley Creek late in 2023 and is now actively looking for new projects to help increase the availability of public trout waters in Wisconsin. We would like to encourage

chapters and members to be on the alert for efforts in your area to acquire access to trout water. You may know of an agency effort or a land trust effort in your area that needs help with funding an acquisition and perhaps is not aware of our Watershed Access Fund. We encourage you to inform the group leading the efforts about our program, and have them contact the State Council. Several of our recent acquisitions have come about because members alerted land trusts or agencies about our fund. We need our chapters and members to be our eyeballs around the state so the fund can continue its track record of getting important parcels into public ownership.

—Kim McCarthy, Grant Program Coordinator

Spring Hearings to include trout questions

The Wisconsin State Council would like to make our membership aware of two advisory questions that will appear on the April 8, 2024 Spring Hearing list of advisory fisheries questions.

Question 2 in the fisheries list of questions submitted by DNR will ask those voting if they favor changing the start of the general inland trout fishing season to the first Saturday in April instead of the first Saturday in May. Reasons provided by the DNR for the possible change include stating that fishing can be difficult in July through September because of vegetation growth, so the change would give harvest anglers more of an opportunity during April. The question appears to be about providing opportunities for more harvest of trout.

Question 3 in the fisheries part of the questionnaire will ask respondents if the current county baseline regulations should be modified. Currently counties have two possible base regulations, green or yellow. Green allows a 5 fish bag with no size limit. Yellow allows a 3 fish bag limit with an 8 inch size limit. The question will ask those voting if they favor abolishing the yellow category and making the green category the standard statewide base regulation. This question,

much like the previous one, would likely increase harvest on those streams currently under yellow regulations.

The Council is curious about where the desire to see these questions on the ballot originated. We are not aware of any groundswell of dissatisfaction on the part of the trout fishing public, or our membership, to see these types of changes brought forth and are curious about why the department is soliciting input on the questions.

While not taking a formal position and understanding that each of our members will decide independently how to vote, the Council feels that science based questions should be addressed about the possible impacts of the changes.

Specifically, we would like to see the studies and biological information dealing with how a large increase in harvest will impact the fishery statewide. The harvest season was already extended to October 15 when the 2016 regulations took effect, and it is now being proposed to extend the harvest season by another full month and expand the number of fish that can be harvested on the yellow category waters. What are the impacts statewide going to be?

Another consideration that we have not seen addressed is that moving the trout regular season

opener to early April would open the trout season at a time few other harvest seasons are open. We would like to know if anglers who would otherwise fish for other species when several seasons open at the same time in May will focus on the earlier opener for trout, which could increase harvest even more. If studies have been done on that issue we are not aware of them.

Yet another issue to consider when deciding on how to vote on these questions is the fact that these proposals are statewide. That brings up the question about whether the impacts may be different in different regions of the state.

We encourage our members to express how they feel about these questions by voting on them. The Spring Hearings will be held on April 8 in all counties. At the meetings Wisconsin Conservation Congress members will be elected and questions will be discussed. Then, from April 10-13, DNR will ask people to actually vote and comment on the questions online. You will be able to access the ballot by visiting the Wisconsin DNR web site. You do not have to attend the hearings on April 8 to cast a ballot between April 10 and 13.

Chair's Column, with Scott Allen

The value of impermanence



Even those of us who slept through philosophy (yo!) may remember the words attributed to the Greek philosopher and avid sport fisher Heraclitus, "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man. There is nothing permanent except change." I don't care what you think, I say Heraclitus was a fisherman. Leap forward a few thousand years and it's no surprise impermanence is central in western philosophy, eastern religions and trout fishing. Who wouldn't treat fishing as a religion?

We all have our demons, dormant and active, that too often stand in the way of our ambitions. That list of what we are fearful of can be long or short: money, heights, snakes, broken tips, romance, health, employment, clowns, beavers. Fear of an excessively aggressive high stick hook set that you know you shouldn't have done with your friend's rod if you want to remain friends but it sure looked cool at the Fly Fishing Film Festival so you're gonna do it too and now you are no longer friends. And everyone's buzzkill, public speaking. The list goes on ad libitum.

The ironic roots of our fears is impermanence, better said as change, yet change is the backbone of innovation. Your fear of that clown under the bed is going to

change the tenor of your evening for certain, who needs that? Time to innovate. There is any number of metrics we can employ to measure the change that has occurred in Wisconsin Trout Unlimited in the last fifty years: miles of stream improvements; membership growth; financial assets; pages of print and circulation of this publication.

The list of the positive effects of change and innovation within Trout Unlimited is too long for the breadth of this column but the list of innovators that accept the challenge and carry it to completion is worthy of note.

On a Saturday evening in early February, we gathered in Oshkosh to honor some of our best innovators: Tom Lager, Dale Lange, Jeff Butler, Dale Dahlke, Paul Douglas and Kirk Olson. Please take time to read in this issue the selfless accomplishments these innovators have provided Trout Unlimited.

A business professor once said to my class: "a business is like a tree, it's either growing or dying." I feel the same holds true for our conservation organization. Be it dam removal, concern for veterans, youth education or innovative stream conservation, most of what these heroes have provided you didn't exist 10 years ago and that is what fuels the growth and energy of TU.

Jim Addis passes

A committed conservationist and highly skilled administrator, the people and natural resources of Wisconsin are better for Jim's decades of exemplary service. In 1974 Jim joined the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as a fisheries manager in the Southeast District. He quickly rose through the ranks, demonstrating exceptional leadership skills in various high-level administrative roles and successfully handling several complex and controversial natural resource management issues. Jim Addis was a valued partner for TU and many other conservation organizations. You can read his full obituary at the Ryan Funeral Home website.

GUEST EDITORIAL

The importance of healthy trout streams

By John Simonson

TU members recognize the importance of trout streams to our trout and our fishing. But do we truly understand the importance of the health of our trout streams to the aquatic ecosystems?

How many know brown trout are more tolerant to organic pollution than mayfly, caddisfly, and stonefly larvae? I know of Wisconsin trout streams where the mayflies are almost non-existent anymore, but wild brown trout are still doing well. Many of you have read or witnessed firsthand, the decline of major mayfly hatches across the country, as well as in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, this means the health of many of our coldwater ecosystems are in decline, even though brown trout populations seem to be doing fine. Eventually there will be a ripple effect that will affect our trout as well.

If we forget about the earth warming issue for a moment, what are the other possible issues causing the decline in aquatic macroinvertebrates in our coldwater trout streams? How about...

- Major flood events.
- Siltation caused by runoff into our streams.
- Neonicotinoids Pesticides used in agriculture.
- Pesticides on residential properties boarding trout streams.
- Poor riparian zones.
- Old culverts or dams blocking the natural flow of the stream.
- Cows in the river.

Other than major floods, which I consider an act of God, we can help reduce the decline of our mayfly, caddisfly, and stonefly populations by focusing on numbers #2 through #7. Correcting these issues will in the long term improve the overall ecosystems which in turn will improve the aquatic insect diversity and densities that live in the benthic zones of our trout streams. These issues can be corrected if we put our minds and energy towards them.

JOHNSON, from last page

Sara joined TU in 1998. There she led major initiatives to strengthen the "grassroots" parts of TU, as well as leading TU's "small dams" program, building on her Wisconsin experiences. In all of her work, she recruited and supported women leaders to help broaden TU's conservation efforts as the angling public grew rapidly.

She then moved on to California where she worked in various consulting capacities focused on uniting social and natural resource sciences to address issues facing fisheries and rivers. She was particularly gifted in working in collaborative and conflict-resolving roles with various interests in watersheds. She also was an author of several publications on dam removal.

Sara was energetic, enthusiastic and sometimes just plain effervescent about rivers and the outdoors,

and enjoyed flyfishing, hiking, her beloved dogs and sharing experiences with her dear friends. She dealt with life's many challenges with grace and determination. Sara's parents (Bess and Howard Johnson) and her brother Michael predeceased her. She is survived by her former spouse Todd Ambs, and dear friends who will miss this gentle caring woman immensely. Sara loved music, and was a huge John Prine fan. This, from his 1972 album "Souvineers," is for Sara:

"Memories they can't be bought-en / They can't be won at carnivals for free / Well, it took me years / To get those souvenirs / And I don't know how they slipped away from me."

Donations in her memory can be made to the River Alliance of Wisconsin or to the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

—Stephen Born

Wisconsin Trout Unlimited

Flash Sale: Now thru May 6

<https://troutunlimitedapparel2024spring.itemorder.com/>

In honor of the work TU is doing in Wisconsin, we're making WI TU embroidered apparel available for a limited time.

For every item sold, \$5 will be donated back to Wisconsin Trout Unlimited!

Online orders only.

Sale ends May 6.

Orders ship approx. 4 weeks after (expect June delivery)









<https://troutunlimitedapparel2024spring.itemorder.com/>

Wisconsin Trout Unlimited is working to ensure future generations access to cold, clean, fishable water.

New approaches being used on ditched streams

TUDARE working with different methods to improve straightened streams.



FANCY CREEK OFFERS A CHANCE TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK

The straightened channel is the left, while the remnant and future meandered channel is still visible on the right. The stream was straightened in the 1940's or 50's, but the original stream channel was never filled in and remains visible today. This portion of Fancy Creek runs through a wetland and the conservation-minded landowner wants to restore the creek to its original channel and restore the wetland.

By Peter Jonas, TUDARE Partnerships Specialist

A sizable portion of our streams in the Driftless Area have been straightened, channelized, or to put it less tactfully, ditched. And yet many of them hold healthy, sometimes remarkable, populations of trout. These streams live in a state of quiet rebellion against ditchdom, constantly using their hydraulic energy to subvert human intentions, and occasionally using a big flood event to make a bold assault for freedom.

Straightened portions of streams may not be the scenic highlight of the Driftless Area landscape, but they should not be neglected. For years, successful habitat projects have been done on straightened streams. The classic approach has been to reduce the slope down to the stream a bit, keep the stream where it is at by arming the discernable corners or eroded slopes with rock and enhancing the stream channel with habitat features.

I have had many pleasant fishing days down in a ditch, catching fish anywhere there is a hint of a turn, a hole or a bit of habitat. I have never needed to resort to belay ropes and carabiners to get in and out of the water, but I will admit that as I get older the thought crosses my mind. One weird benefit of fishing ditched streams is a feeling of really being isolated and "away from it all" because you are below the horizon line. It feels a bit like fishing in a tunnel, but you can't beat it for solitude.

Climate change and the resulting flood events like those in 2018 have damaged stream restoration projects to the point where extensive repairs or makeovers became necessary.

This has led our partners in the Natural Resources Conservation Service and county conservation offices to reconsider the amount of rock and overhead cover we install in all types of restoration projects, including streams that have been straightened.

TUDARE is currently working on two markedly different projects on straightened streams in Wisconsin

using techniques that take our changing climate into account.

On Fancy Creek in Richland County, we have a rare opportunity to turn back the clock. The stream was straightened in the 1940's or 50's, but the original stream channel was never filled in and remains visible today. This portion of Fancy Creek runs through a wetland and the conservation-minded landowner wants to restore the creek to its original channel and restore the wetland.

We plan to remove recently accumulated sediment out of the old stream channel and install habitat and then plug the ditch and reconnect the channel to the stream. The surrounding wetland will be restored to reduce the amount of reed

canary grass and encourage native species. This will be a large-scale, six figure project that requires extensive engineering, design and construction expertise. An extensive list of statewide partners is lining up to contribute expertise and resources to this project, including the NRCS, Pheasants Forever, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, the Mississippi Valley

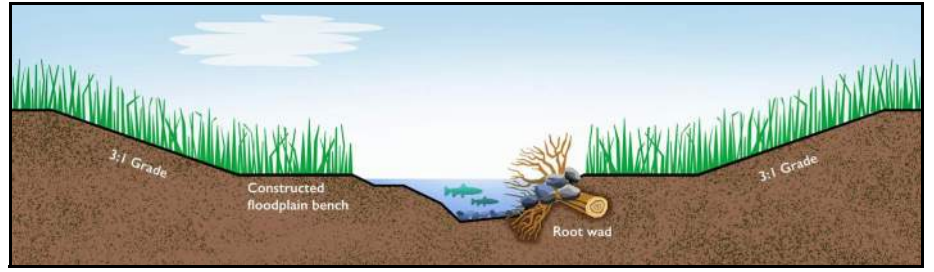
Conservancy and the University of Wisconsin.

The re-meandering of Fancy Creek demonstrates a comprehensive stream restoration project on a site that offers a unique opportunity to move the environmental needle. However, not every stream can be restored in this way.

Different approach on Danuser Creek

On Danuser the plan is to transform 1,360 feet of the presently straightened stream into an inset floodplain. NRCS terms this practice a "two-staged ditch," which doesn't exactly sound like restoration, but this project will indeed improve the current condition of the stream by reducing soil loss and phosphorous runoff. It will also improve fishing by installing trout habitat.

The current slope from the surrounding cropland to the stream is quite steep. More than 200 truckloads of sediment will be removed from the banks and trucked outside of the floodplain to create a 3:1



MORE THAN 200 TRUCK LOADS TO BE REMOVED FROM DANUSER

This will essentially create a base layer which the stream bed sits on a base layer, with and a second tier on each side of the stream bank with a slope up to the riparian buffer. This will allow water to dissipate during flood events and also allow the stream bed some movement.

slope to the surrounding fields.

This will essentially create a base layer which the stream bed sits in and a second tier on each side of the stream bank with a slope up to the riparian buffer. This will allow water to dissipate during flood events and also allow the stream bed some movement.

Habitat features

Habitat features such as root wads, cross-channel logs, weirs and boulder clusters will be installed to improve living conditions for Danuser's mixed population of brook and brown trout.

The partners driving the Danuser project are the Wisconsin Clearwaters Chapter and the Waumandee Rod and Gun. A large portion of the funding will come from the NRCS, Buffalo County and a grant from the Driftless Area Restoration

Effort National Fish Habitat Partnership program. The project will cost around \$70,000 and about \$38,000 will be earth-moving expense.

Every project is different

Every stream restoration project is different. In the planning process, landowner preferences, permitting conditions, a site's potential to support native fish, the capacity and resources of partner organizations and the match of the project with the goals and restraints of available funding sources all contribute to the ultimate shape a project will take. The scale and scope of the Fancy Creek and Danuser Creek projects are different, but they share a common goal of improving fish habitat and developing climate-resilient improvements to ditched streams.

3RD ANNUAL

Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited Chapter

PRESENTS

THE SPRING FAIR FUNDRAISER

SWTU SUPPORTS

STREAM CONSERVATION, IMPROVEMENT, AND PUBLIC ACCESS

Saturday, April 20th | **The East Side Club**
2PM to 7PM | **Madison, Wisconsin**

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RODS, GEAR, GUIDED TRIPS, ART, AND MORE

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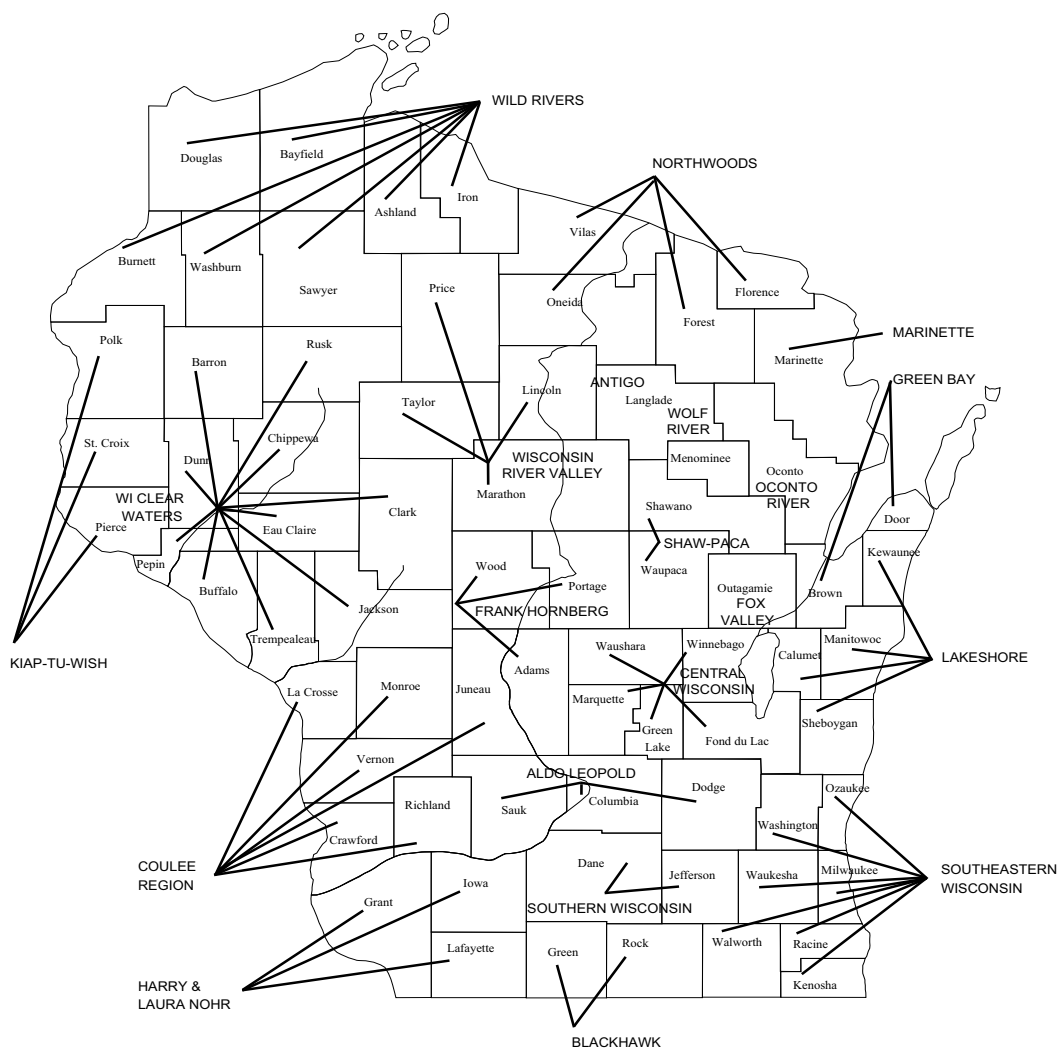
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[HTTPS://SWTU.ORG/SPRINGFUNDRAISER](https://swtu.org/springfundraiser)




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Legal Counsel: Open
Communications: Open

Are you getting emails from TU?

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

WISCONSIN TROUT

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

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Boyd Roessler, Secretary

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West Fork Sports Club news

"Trout Central" is waiting for you in the Driftless Area. The West Fork Sports Club had a wonderful year last year and is looking forward to 2024. Improvements include spiffing up the cabins for rent, signage to help people know where things are, trees planted. More than 1,000 trout were released into the West Fork of the Kickapoo, in partnership with Living Waters Bible Camp and the DNR. We worked with TUDARE and TU's 5 Rivers group installing LUNKER structures, sloping the banks, and create a new easy access point to the stream. We constructed three stream barbs to narrow the stream and deposit sediment behind the barbs, increase velocity, reduce turbidity and increase depth.

We are trying out a new reservation system for camping. Reservations for sites can be done at the same web site where you can reserve the cabins, clubhouse or day shelter. <https://www.campspot.com/park/west-forks-sports-club-viroqua-wi>

Upcoming events

April 26-28: 5 Rivers TU college students. This event includes seven midwest colleges, and is a collaboration with the WFSC, Southern and Coulee Region chapters, Paul Krahn from TUDARE and Mike Miller from the DNR.

May 11: HeddonFest. Classic Anglers Bamboo fishers group.

May 17-19: Learn to Fish program from the DNR. Friday, arrive at 3 p.m. to set up their tents and settle in. Program starts 5 p.m. with an overview of the area, an intro to gear, and more. Saturday, breakfast

and off everyone goes for a day of fishing. Departure time determined by instructors and participants. Back to camp about 3 p.m. to clean and cook the catch, feast and visit, then evening presentations. Sunday is breakfast and more fishing. Back to camp by 1 p.m. to clean catch and pack it on ice to take home. Clean up camp and depart.

June 8: WFSC member meeting.

August 10: Coulee Region Chapter Stream Girls event. <https://www.couleeregiontu.org/calendar>

Sept 20: Bamboo Rodmakers – Midwest Bamboo Rodmakers with Scott Grady

Always looking for help

For 2024 The WFSC would love to see more members to get more involved. Consider spending an evening at the new Brookie Cabin, offering to mow the lawn with our riding mower, and helping at work days. Your board appreciates the help. If you can't physically help during work days, consider making financial donations so the board can hire out the extra work needed to keep the grounds and facilities functional.

Improvements for 2024 include increasing the number of brook trout released by 800, tuning up the shower mechanisms, planting more trees, raising funds for seven new picnic tables (\$1,500) and reclaiming yet more of the grounds from the flood of 2018. We have two areas remaining that are rocky and we are unable to mow. We push these areas back by a foot each year reclaiming grass and grounds. We hope you enjoy the WFSC.

Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics

Despite having all our rods, reels, fly boxes and instructional materials stolen in December, the WWFFC offered an intro to fly-fishing class during the Wisconsin State Council annual meeting in Oshkosh. Thank you to volunteers Jane Lehman-Deprey, Pam Van Erem, Lisa Wilson, Lisa Gilmore, Sara Gottfriedson, Celia Groff and Carol Murphy for introducing 20 new women anglers to the sport. The State Council and the Southern Wisconsin Chapter sponsor the event.

June clinics

Our June clinics will also be happening. The Beginners Clinic is completely full, but with a waiting list. The Women's on the Water Intermediate Clinic, or the Wowsc-I, as we fondly call it, still has some openings. You can find info and register for both clinics at <https://www.swtu.org/learn/womens-flyfishing-clinic/>

In this clinic, mentors and guides take the students out on the water for three sessions to learn while on the water. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Lisa Wilson at lawfinnee@gmail.com or 608-213-6267. The event starts the afternoon of June 12 and goes all day June 13. Meals and camping are available onsite for volunteers when meals don't conflict with fishing. We brown bag some meals. ?

Stolen gear update

To date nothing has been recovered and little progress has been made. However, we received swift generosity from numerous groups and individuals. The includes the Southern Wisconsin Chapter, the Wisconsin Fishing Expo, several individuals who sent in donations and Echo Fly Rods, which offered us a steep discount to replace the rods. Orvis sent us four rods.

Also, Lee S. from Alaska, Lisa G. from Illinois, Jeff A., Steph Albano from Idaho (Fanatical Fly Fishing), Lisa W., Deb M., Berry P., Paul W. Charles S. and a few WITU chapters helped us afford replacing our rods and reels. We are now working on replacing waders, boots, instructional materials, etc.

14th year

The Wisconsin Women's Fly Fishing Clinics are entering the 14th year. Participants, leaders and volunteers come from all over the Midwest to make these clinics available to women interested in fly fishing. In fact, the clinics are among the largest and longest running clinics in the Midwest, if not in the nation. We thank all of you who have contributed.

Participants walk away with the basics of the sport, as well as a fly box, nippers and hemostat to get them started. They also receive information from the DNR and resources and connections to geographical opportunities to participate in TU, conservation and future fishing opportunities.

Youth camp filling fast

Following the trend of last year's camp, the 2024 WITU Youth Fishing Camp has been filling up fast. I have been fielding emails from all over the state and have reached out to the chapters in the areas the interested youth are in. Thank you to all the chapters that have agreed to sponsor them. As of this writing there are five open positions. If you have a youth in mind, please reach out to me to save a roster spot. Each chapter has a chance to sponsor one student until April 30, at which time we'll open it up for chapters to sponsor additional students.

The camp is August 15-18 and is open to youth ages 12-16. Check-in is at 1 p.m. on Thursday and the camp wraps up with a lunch and an award presentation on Sunday at 1:30 p.m. The location will be the

Pine Lake Bible Camp between Waupaca and Wild Rose. We worked with the camp to keep the cost to chapters at \$250 per student.

We have a couple of openings for volunteers and mentors, and openings for the Sunday fish-a-longs. If you are interested in helping with the fish-a-longs, you don't need to know the area. We have angling spots secured, including maps. Come for a day or for the weekend. Wisconsin Trout Unlimited picks up the cost of lodging and meals for all volunteers and mentors. We also need a couple of volunteers to help with the Sunday meal. If interested in any of these open positions, please contact Linn Beck at 920-216-7408 or chlbeck@att.net.

—Linn Beck - WITU Youth Camp Director



VETERANS ON THE FLY ENJOYING VALENTINES DAY

Valentine's Day SWTU Veterans On the Fly class. We thought we would have a light turnout but a few of the wives came out and brought cookies. When the whole family is involved, our mission is a success. Our tying classes ran through March, and we'll be back on the water in May. All veterans and their families are welcome. There's never any cost. If you don't have a Service Partnership group in your chapter please contact Mike Johnson at 262-327-0849 to find out how to get one going.

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Council recognizes amazing group of leaders

Wisconsin TU stars shone bright on an amazing February night in Oshkosh. We proudly present the 2024 Wisconsin State Council Award Recipients.



Resource Award of Merit: Tom Lager

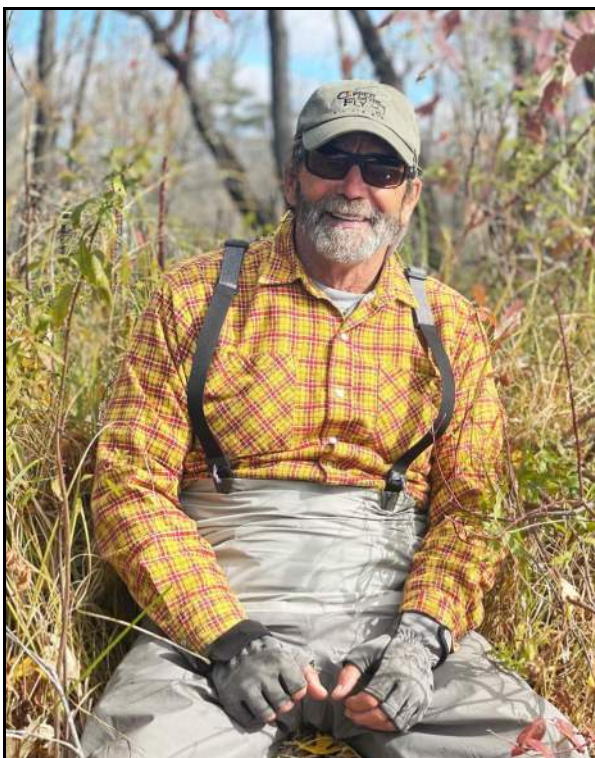
Tom Lager has been a long-time member of the Fox Valley Chapter and has served in many leadership positions, including chapter president.

Tom has a passion and history of effective coldwater conservation advocacy. He like a glue that holds the chapter together. He keeps us focused on the real reason we're involved with Trout Unlimited -- coldwater conservation. For a number of years Tom has written articles for our newsletter about the real indicators of healthy coldwater streams -- the bugs.

He was a leader in starting TU CARES and in securing several successful projects in the Central Sands Region. Much of this success is due to the wonderful relationships he has developed with the Wisconsin DNR, Waushara County, town governments and other conservation groups, along with his ability to write grant applications to fund these projects. The result of his efforts is tens of thousands of dollars to improve, repair and renew our trout waters. Tom is a leader in keeping TU CARES active and meaningful for our entire state.

Besides having served as Council Secretary, Tom was more recently involved in the TU's effort to identify Priority Waters. He has also served as the Council Vice Chair for the Central Region for several years. Every person he meets and talks to understands the importance of trout waters in our state. He puts in countless hours showing everyone the value of bugs, from our youth camp students to our members within his own chapter and throughout the state.

Tom does this work out of love for our resources, not recognition. We cannot think of a more deserving person to be recognized with our Resource Award of Merit.



CENTRAL WISCONSIN CHAPTER EARNS COUNCIL'S SILVER TROUT AWARD

The Central Wisconsin Chapter has a consistently impressive list of ongoing activities. They hold five work days per year with an average attendance of 35 volunteers. The August workday the Council's Youth Camp attendees and mentors, so on that day the attendance is closer to 100. Work days often include members from other chapters such as Fox Valley, Hornberg, Green Bay and Elliott Donnelly.

Silver Trout Chapter Award: Central Wisconsin Chapter

The Central Wisconsin Chapter has a consistently impressive list of ongoing activities. They hold five work days per year with an average attendance of 35 volunteers. The August workday the Council's Youth Camp attendees and mentors, so on that day the attendance is closer to 100. Work days often include members from other chapters such as Fox Valley, Hornberg, Green Bay and Elliott Donnelly.

Their River Keepers program is celebrating 20 years of monitoring streams for water clarity, oxygen, flow rate, temperature, biotic index and habitat assessment. There are currently 95 volunteers on 30 teams monitoring 35 stream locations in the Central Sands area.

Each February the chapter hosts TroutFest, a free event with a lineup of vendors and programs about fishing, conservation and other topics. The state's best fly tyers demonstrate their skills, and there's even a youth fly-tying table. Several fly shops have tables set up, as do various wildlife artists. The event includes bucket raffles, as well as prizes for youth members. It's not so much a fundraising event but rather a late-winter cabin-fever-type fun day.

On the first weekend of every June, which is the state's free-fishing weekend, the chapter holds its Dan Harmon III Fly Fishing School along the banks of the Waupaca River. The chapter provides an experienced guide or mentor for every two students. This two-day event includes classroom instruction, casting lessons instruction about different methods of fly fishing. Day two is the fishing outing.

The chapter has always been very involved in the Council's Youth Camp each August. Since the inception of the camp, CWTU has had at

least six or more members representing the chapter at the camp. They serve on the organizing committee, present programs to the students, volunteer as mentors and much more.

And for the general public and members, the chapter has for years offered fly-tying classes for beginning, intermediate and master-level fly tyers.

Ongoing chapter projects include the dam removal on the west branch of the White River, monitoring the solar farm outside of Wautoma and working on the Younglove Project on the west branch of the White River. They have several ongoing project sites on the Pine River, as well as on the Mecan River and Bird Creek.

Never a chapter to miss out on opportunity to work with kids, the Central Chapter supports a Trout In the Classroom program at the Winnebago Lutheran Academy in Fond du Lac.

Recently, they teamed up with the DNR to organize a trout-redd-identification program. You can read more about this in the current issue of Wisconsin Trout.

Two other exciting projects are in the early stages. One is "Adopt a Stream," which will train volunteers to operate brush cutters and make paths along several rivers in the area where there is state-owned land. The other involves a new high-tech stream monitoring system which is in the experimental stage on Wedde creek.

CWTU's annual banquet always has more than 100 attendees and provides the fundraising to support all of its amazing programs. Some of the programs and classes are funded through donations from membership legacy memorials and donations from members.

The collective efforts of its many volunteers, combined with great leadership from board members and officers, makes the Central Wisconsin Chapter an obvious choice for the Council's Silver Trout Award.

Service Partnership Award: Jeff Butler

Jeff Butler, in service to the veteran community, has helped countless men and women through the ebbs and flows of Wisconsin's waters for a lifetime of therapeutic harmony. As an Army veteran, his intimate knowledge of the familial bonds built around the military culture provides a unique outlook and comfort in conversation in any time spent with him. His recognition of our rivers' majesty and their benefits to mental health has been paramount in giving back to these heroes while volunteering for the Wisconsin Trout Unlimited Service Partnership Program.

Whether he's guiding folks down the St. Croix River in the USS Driftwood or organizing an event on a nearby lake, Jeff has recognized the value of partnering with county veteran service offices and other organizations, and has been an integral part to many veterans' memories in their participation in the Service Partnership. The partnerships built through his work have been a bridge in continuing the mission of giving back as WITU continues to look for ways to maximize the message and service that our organization brings to the veteran community.

Jeff has been a stalwart member of Trout Unlimited, carrying the torch in serving its members for many years in the Northwoods and beyond. His stewardship has lent guidance in how to best serve the veteran community both as a leader and partner in camaraderie and fellowship. Through events with other veteran-forward businesses and organizations, he has been able to maximize the impact of creating smiles after a day on the water.

His many years of dedication and sacrifice given to this program is humbling and treasured by anyone that has either seen him on the oars or spent time in his company as he provides a sense of comfort and relaxation in the commonality of being a fellow vet. The river rat mentality that Jeff exudes daily is something to be experienced firsthand and leaves just about anyone a little lighter in their step after chasing fish and letting daily stresses and haunting memories disappear in the next cast.

The State Council is honored to recognize Jeff for his tremendous love for his veteran brothers and sisters and the continuing work that he does. He is most deserving of the Service Partnership Award.



Dist. Service – Youth Education Dale Dahlke

Dale Dahlke has organized and maintained the Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter's Trout In the Classroom program for more than eight years. As a retired high school biology teacher, he has an exceptional rapport and credibility with the participating teachers. Dale's scientific knowledge has been a real asset in helping teachers through the challenges with keeping trout healthy and growing until their release. Under Dale's leadership, the Clearwaters Chapter supports nine schools in a large geographic region that host Trout In the Classroom programs.

Dale demonstrated an exemplary commitment to youth education during his 35-year career as a professional educator and has continued to promote learning during his retirement. For more than 15 years he has assisted with the UW-Stout fly-fishing class by teaching students about macro-invertebrates. He also provides casting instruction for Menominee Middle School students during summer school at the Bjornson Education-Recreation Center, along with occasional angling instruction for other youth groups and venues.

During his teaching career Dale, along with other faculty, organized and led ecology and environmental education camps during the summer at Lake Galilee in Mellon, Wisconsin. He took students who successfully completed the camp program on 80-mile survival hikes, canoe trips on the Flambeau River and backpacking trips on Isle Royale, where students studied the predator/prey relationship between moose and wolves.

Dale currently serves on the Menominee School District Board of Education and previously served on the St. Paul's Lutheran School Board. He is an active member of the Wisconsin Clearwaters board and a regular volunteer on stream brushing projects.

We are honored to present our Distinguished Service-Youth Education Award to Dale Dahlke.

**CONGRATS TO
OUR 2024
WISCONSIN
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AWARD
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Reel Partner Award

Paul Douglas/Douglas Art and Frame

For years, without fail or hesitation, Paul professionally frames two sets of trout stamp prints – One for our prestigious Resource Award of Merit and one for an auction item.

Paul grew up in Kenosha and came to Madison as a student. After earning a B.A., he moved to San Francisco and was awarded a Masters in Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute. While in school, he ran the frame shop for several national galleries and discovered his calling. He lived in San Francisco for 14 years, where he met his wife and began a family. Like many, Madison lured him home.

In 2005, he made the leap from employee to owner and opened Douglas Art & Frame. He has a vision for quality craftsmanship and the support of the artistic community.

For his years of supporting his local chapter and the State Council with his quality art and frame services, the Council is honored to bestow our Reel Partner Award to Paul Douglas and Douglas Art and Frame.



Distinguished Service - Leadership Dale Lange

Dale Lange represents the quintessential TU leader. Whenever a need arises or something needs to be done, Dale seems to be there to do it. He rose through the ranks of the Marinette County Chapter, and has served in every officer position, including his current role as chapter president.

Dale got involved in his local chapter back in the 1980's and for many years has served as its banquet chair. It is estimated that he helped bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars to be used to support the chapters' work on the trout streams of Marinette County and beyond.

Dale recognizes the importance of TU's habitat restoration work on our home waters. But he also knows it doesn't happen without community involvement. Always looking for ways to give back, Dale helps lead a fly-fishing fundamentals clinic every winter to help get people more connected to their watersheds.

Dale's leadership doesn't stop at the chapter level. For several years, Dale served the State Council as Education Chair.

Since 2019, Dale has served as regional vice chair for the Council's northeast region. He has excelled in this challenging position, convincing local chapters to pool their resources for the betterment of the entire area. This role has also allowed Dale to be a valuable member of the Council's Executive Committee, which guides the State Council's activities.

Dale also serves as the Marinette County Chapter representative at these regional meetings. Each year since 1985 the chapters come together to support trout habitat work in northeast Wisconsin. This region is large geographically and contains an enormous amount of trout resources. The annual meetings bring together seven chapters, four DNR district offices, the U.S. Forest Service, TU's Great Lakes Restoration crew and sometimes counties or local municipalities. The various agencies submit requests for trout habitat work that could not take place without chapter funding. The regional vice chair works with the chapters to make sure all the requests are met.

Even during the pandemic years, Dale managed to secure funding for all the requests from the various agencies. He has accomplished that work with a friendly attitude that has led chapters to contribute hard-earned funds for a good cause. In the years that Dale has led the region, no request has gone unmet.

Clearly, Dale is a most deserving recipient of the Council's Distinguished Service in Leadership Award.



Hunt Resource Professional Award Kirk Olson

The Coulee Region Chapter nominated Kirk Olson for this award for his efforts above and beyond his job description. Kirk is the fisheries biologist for the majority of our chapter's area, covering.

Kirk has been an important voice for coldwater resources. His crew completes a detailed watershed assessment report each year in addition to their annual trend sites. Additionally, he has made it a goal to survey as many non-designated streams each year to increase the protection on those streams. As we typically say in our area, if it is a blue line on a map, it likely holds trout. But without the protections afforded to trout streams, degradations to non-designated streams can negatively affect other trout streams. Kirk has been the statewide leader in trout stream classifications in Wisconsin because of this extra effort.

Kirk has led three major fish-kill investigations and developed new methods to assess the economic loss associated with fish kills on trout streams in Wisconsin. Kirk worked with the Department of Justice and successfully secured restitution for these events. The case fined the operators \$242,000 for these three fish kills and associated water pollution. Of that fine, \$126,000 was awarded to the DNR and will be used for stream habitat restoration activities in the Coulee Region. Kirk's leadership, efforts and tenacity was a major reason for this successful enforcement action and the technique he developed is now being used by other fisheries staff in Wisconsin to seek appropriate fish-kill restitution when similar cases are present.

Kirk has also been a leader in coldwater research and management in the Coulee Region. Kirk has led efforts to restore brook trout in Maple Dale Creek by removing brown trout upstream of a fish barrier. It is now one of the few brook trout fisheries south of Interstate 90 in the Coulee Region that harbors native brook trout.

Kirk has also been conducting age and growth analysis by using pit tags on streams within the Coulee Region to track fish growth and conditions over time. Kirk also completed a large-scale creel survey on the West Fork of the Kickapoo River and has done opening-day car counts to make the most efficient use of stocking efforts. He has initiated a native sculpin reintroduction project for streams that had lost the species due to past degradation. In addition, Kirk has spent considerable time securing numerous public access easements on numerous coldwater streams in the region.

Kirk provides presentations at chapter meetings, serves on committees for graduate students at UW – La Crosse, has assisted other master's students at the university and has been an important advocate for coldwater resources in the Coulee Region. Each fall, he has recorded brook trout spawning in our native brook trout waters and shared those videos with our chapter, often on his own time. Each year, these videos are some of our most liked and widely distributed posts.

Additionally, he has taken on additional responsibilities with the retirement of the La Crosse office's habitat coordinator. He was responsible for designing, permitting and coordinating the completion of the past two years of habitat improvement projects. And the transfer of a long-time technician has been a further strain that has required additional time and effort outside of his normal job responsibilities. Fortunately, both of those positions have been recently filled.

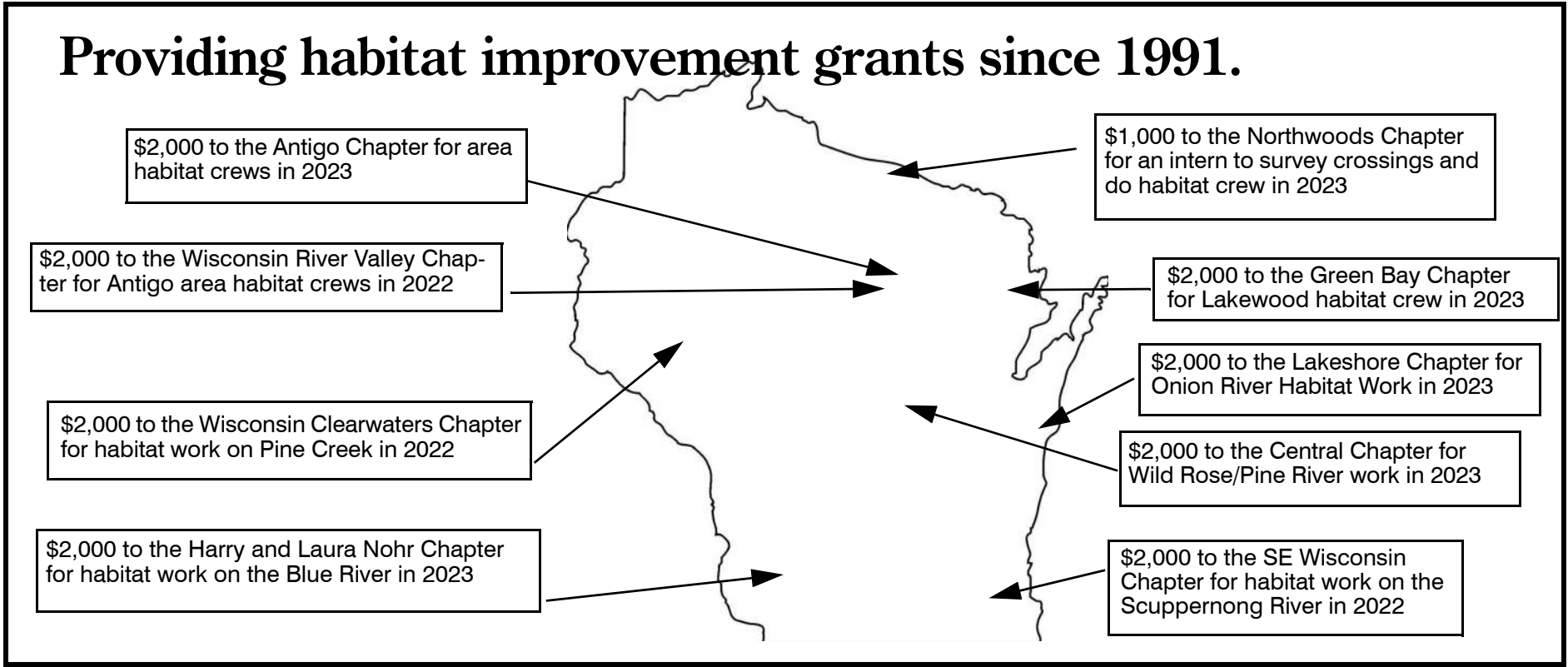
Kirk is a great communicator and advocate for coldwater resources in our area. If there is ever an issue in our area, we know we can trust Kirk to have the resources in mind. We are grateful for his efforts for coldwater resources in the Coulee Region and couldn't imagine a better person to receive the State Council's Robert Hunt Resource Professional Award.



Please support Friends of Wis. TU in 2024

The 2024 Friends of Wisconsin TU grant request period ended on January 15 and 10 TU chapters have received grants totaling \$25,000 for projects across Wisconsin. The Friends of Wisconsin TU program wishes to thank all of our donors for their generous support. We could not do this without you.

Providing habitat improvement grants since 1991.



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Yes, I want to join the "Friends" of Wisconsin TU.
Enclosed is my check for \$100 or more, payable to Wisconsin Trout Unlimited.

MAIL TO: Kim McCarthy
736 Meadowbrook Court
Green Bay, WI 54313

Name

Address

City, State Zip Phone #

TUDARE update

Driftless Area Restoration Effort to undergo Congressional renewal in 2024

The Driftless Area Restoration Effort is one of the original National Fish Habitat Partnerships, having originated as a Fish Habitat Partnership (or FHP) in 2006. In compliance with the 2020 America's Conservation Enhancement Act (ACE Act), the National Fish Habitat Partnerships must complete an application process through Congress that will effectively 'renew' our FHP. The DARE partnership is one of the largest and most successful partnerships in terms of leveraging funding resources from a wide variety of sources to implement fish habitat projects.

Our partnership is focused on habitat restoration for Driftless Area aquatic organisms and herptiles as well as unique ecological habitats such as springs or karst features and the riparian and wetland areas that envelop them. During the past 17 years the partnership has received more than \$4 million in funding, which has supported 74 projects that resulted in approximately 30 miles of instream habitat improvement, 50 miles of riparian habitat improvement and 30 acres of wetlands improvement, all for game and non-game species alike. The partnership supported 15 barrier removal projects that benefited cold and cool-water streams. The partnership has also supported significant assessment projects such as brook trout genetic testing, habitat condition and modeling analysis, trout stream thermal assessments

and economic and recreational studies.

Because our partnership is nearly 20 years old, we are reaching out to partners to re-affirm their commitment to the DARE National Fish Habitat Partnership and inviting new partners to join us. We will be requesting commitment letters this spring and early summer. We have built a partnership comprised of 210 members, so we have our work cut out for us reconnecting with the newest and oldest partners. We would welcome support from chapters or volunteers to help compile letters from within your network and solicit new partners. We currently have about 25 business/corporate partners and would love to increase the support from that sector, as well. Please reach out to Sara to volunteer or share your recommendations. (Sara.Strassman@tu.org).

Simms support

The TU Driftless Area Restoration Area team extends a hearty thanks to Simms Fishing Products. Simms recently selected TUDARE as one of the recipients of its program that allows e-commerce customers to donate 1 percent of their purchase to a conservation cause. Generous customers helped Simms reach the \$5,000 gift cap in a little over a month.

After fulfilling the target, Simms has extended support to other TU

initiatives with this opportunity. Thanks again to Simms, its customers and all who support us.

Nohr Chapter has some great events planned

April 6: Tree planting on an easement of the Grant River, just downstream of Pine Knob Road, just outside of Lancaster. The goal is to plant 100 swamp white oaks throughout this easement to promote canopy shading.

April 27: A joint workday with Southern Wisconsin Chapter is planned with Conley Lewis Creek in Iowa County. Volunteers will be removing invasive woody plants and planting native prairie seed to create a native buffer for this stream.

May 18: A joint workday with the Southern Wisconsin Chapter is planned on Big Spring Creek, assisting the DNR in removing willows.

If you would like to help out with these efforts, contact Ted Swenson at 608-469-2038 or swensonted@gmail.com

Aldo Leopold Chapter receives STIHL award

Congratulations to the Aldo Leopold Chapter for receiving a \$1,500 grant toward the purchase of STIHL gear. The Aldo Leopold Chapter is revisiting its earlier successes in maintenance work on area streams, having a strong history in stream work in the eastern Driftless

Area. TUDARE and STIHL are happy to help them increase their chapter's capacity. STIHL has been an incredible partner on this program and we offer sincere thanks to Regional Sales Manager for Midwest STIHL Dan Pherson and his fantastic crew of sawyers. Hold the date of September 19, 2024 for a joint workday and watch for updates closer to the date.

TUDARE celebrates World Fish Migration Day

On Friday, April 29 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. TUDARE staff Peter and Sara will do a hands-on learning project for students in La Crescent, Minnesota as part of their annual Waterfestival. This event will engage youth in learning about fish and their habitats. It is also a World Fish Migration Day activity. If your chapter would like to host an event for World Fish Migration Day, you can learn more and sign up at <https://worldfishmigrationday.com/>

Upcoming TUDARE presentations at TU chapter events:

April 9: Peter will make a presentation at the Southern Wisconsin TU chapter meeting.

May 28: Peter will make a presentation at the Southeast Wisconsin TU chapter meeting.

Watershed Access Fund: Obtaining public access

The Council's Watershed Access Fund has now completed its involvement in an important acquisition along the Kickapoo River. The hunt is now on for additional properties or easements that can be purchased to add to the amount of public water available for public trout fishing. Thanks go to all of our generous donors who have helped make our additions to public fishing areas possible. We appreciate your support.

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| Larry Mahr | In Mem. of John Gribb | | Lake Mills, WI |
| Paul & Nichelle Martin | Baraboo | Frederick Seybold | Madison, WI |
| Jeanne & Kim McCarthy | | Stewart Smith | In Memory of |
| | Green Bay, WI | James Smith | Wisconsin Rapids, WI |
| Carolyn McGuire | Marinette, WI | Mary Spaay | |
| Jane Mc Mahon | Poynette, WI | | In Memory of John Gribb |
| Michael Medich | Green Bay, WI | Michael Staggs | Poynette, WI |
| Peter Meronec | Stevens Point, WI | Warren Stern | West Bend, WI |
| Tom Mertens | Green Bay, WI | Ronald Suslick | Peshtigo, WI |
| Robert Moser | Milwaukee, WI | Patrick Trafton | Madison, WI |
| Gene Mueller | Monona, WI | John Tweddale | Madison, WI |
| David Muresan | Middleton, WI | Dennis, Becky Vanden Bloomen | |
| Doug Nelson | Appleton, WI | Eau Claire, WI | |
| Eric Nelson | Chili, WI | Greg Vodak | Stoughton, WI |
| Paul Neuman | | Scott & Holly Wagner | Hudson, WI |
| | In memory of Corky Hellyer | Donald Wellhouse | Kaukauna, WI |
| Herb Oechler | Wauwatosa, WI | Topf Wells | Madison, WI |
| Cheryl & Winston Ostrow | | Timothy & Karen White | |
| | Viroqua, WI | | In Memory of John Gribb |
| Donald Persons | Janesville, WI | Paul Williams | Madison, WI |
| Randal Rake | Helena, MT | Lisa Wilson | Poynette, WI |
| Bob Retko | Viroqua, WI | Walter Zakahi | |
| John & Susan Retzlaff | | | In Memory of John Gribb |
| | In Memory of John Gribb | Ryan Zenk | Mondovi, WI |
| Micheal Richgels | Onalaska, WI | | |
| Kenneth Rizzo | Oconomowoc | | TU CHAPTERS |
| David Rhode | Waukesha, WI | Antigo Chapter | Antigo, WI |
| Michael Routhieaux | Janesville, WI | Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter | Hudson, WI |
| Mike Ryan, in Memory of | | Marinette Chapter | Marinette, WI |
| Chuck Valiere, Rosholt, WI | | Oconto Watershed | Gillett, WI |
| Tom Ryan | Whitefish Bay, WI | Southeast Wisconsin | Milwaukee |

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

Make your check payable to Wisconsin Trout Unlimited

MAIL TO: Kim McCarthy	_____
736 Meadowbrook Court	Name
Green Bay WI 54313	_____
	Address

	City, State, Zip

	Phone

TU CARES and the Partners

Words and photo by Tom Lager

TU CARES (Trout Unlimited Central Area Restoration Effort for Sustainability) continues to make significant progress indicated by increases in numbers of projects, partners and grant awards to fund activities in Wisconsin's Central Sand Hills Ecological Landscape. Partnerships appear to be the most significant driver of success because they are the origin of ideas, solutions and implement actions to achieve objectives.

The 8th Annual Central Regional Meeting of DNR Fisheries and Trout Habitat Restoration and TU, held in February, welcomed 30 people. Most notably were the new organizations: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Waushara and Marquette Land and Water and Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc. Representatives from past years included DNR Trout Habitat Management, Water Quality and Fisheries and TUs Great Lakes Program are continuing partners with TU CARES.

The expansion of projects within TU's Priority Waters of Central Wisconsin necessitates inclusion of a growing group of partners, as well as greater in-depth involvement with current partners., Great Lakes Program Manager Chris Collier, who has assisted TU CARES in past years, is now exploring means for involvement of his organization with TU CARES and DNR. The understanding of the magnitude of current and future projects makes evident the opportunity for eventual TU professional staff hands-on collaborative involvement – a process that will take time and careful planning.

TU CARES and partners have been successful in raising significant funds largely in support of projects conducted on the West Branch of the White River (WBWR) and its tributary stream. Approximately \$1.2 million has been raised through

grants and TU chapter contributions during the last eight years. TU CARES designated the WBWR to be the exemplar stream of what is possible to achieve in other streams across the Central Sands region.

TU CARES is well on the way to completing initial plans for the WBWR and is now focusing on the Mekan River Watershed. As the WBWR was a demonstration stream, the Mekan River Watershed will be a demonstration watershed for the other watersheds within our designated Priority Waters area.

Mekan River

The Mekan River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan is the newest project and will kick-off this spring. A DNR Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Grant was awarded with matching funds equally divided among Central Wisconsin and Fox Valley chapters. Essentially, all of the partners in attendance at the 8th Annual Meeting will be involved in the project, especially those from the Great Lakes Program, with Chris Collier.

Dave Bolha (DNR), and Chris Firkus with a colleague from Mergent Inc. and Mike San Dretto, John Tucker, Al Johnson and Tom Lager developed the grant application which was submitted by the Fox Valley Chapter.

13th Avenue Dam

In the meantime, the 13th Avenue Dam Removal/Road Crossing Replacement and Restoration Project is making progress with grant-sourced funding. The chapter's second application for a Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) grant for approximately \$400,000 was approved, pending a few financial documents. The remaining funds needed for this \$1.8-million project are to provide for the remaining cost of \$550,000 for replacing the road crossing. Dave Bolha, on behalf of DNR, applied for a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant to meet this remaining cost and the award decision for the grant is expected in spring of 2024. Funds needed for the extensive stream restoration costs at the dam site and extending 2.9 miles downstream may require a small grant that is yet to be decided.

The Younglove Project, under DNR leadership, is close to completion on the WBWR. However, the last portion of the project will require some of the work during the 2024 stream work season. Throughout 2022 and 2023 riffle/fords were installed; the new parking lot site was prepped; emerald ash borer killed ash trees were used throughout the stream corridor for additional log sill installation along with rock to be used in further bank cover modification and herbicide application. A close-out report and final

expense management will conclude in December 2024.

Changing grant funding strategy

The TU CARES grant funding strategy will be changing from chapter-prepared and submitted grant applications to an approach collaborating with partners. Most importantly TU's Great Lakes Program and other large organizations like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with their Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, will become appropriately active in future projects. The driving force behind this change is twofold: 1) grants provide for salaries for the organization employees and 2) these organizations have grant-writing experience and an organization better equipped to manage grants and can therefore be more effective in the highly competitive field of federal and state grant funding. A positive example of this change is that grants for project activities in the Central Sands Region written by Chris Collier will provide the salary for TU staff working in our region. Another benefit is that TU chapter volunteers (Al Johnson in this case) will not have to invest two to three months grappling with items such as obtaining a UEI number and qualifying for a SAM.gov registration.

Follow TU CARES at <https://www.facebook.com/centralsandsregionTU>



AN AMAZING TEAM OF PARTNERS

TU CARES and partners meet for the 8th Annual Central Regional Meeting of DNR Fisheries and Habitat Restoration Team and TU.

Latest news from TU National

Our own TU National Leader, National Leadership Council (NLC) Representative Linn Beck, provides us with an update on news from our national headquarters in Virginia.

It has been a busy couple of months in the NLC so far in 2024. In January we held our quarterly meeting via Zoom. Beverly Smith announced that the CX3 meeting in St. Paul would be postponed. CEO Chris Wood discussed organizational priorities and stressed the importance of NLC workgroups being tied into the Priority Waters plan. He went over the Strategic Plans 3 goals including priority waters, engaging a younger constituency and investing in our people and technology. He would like everyone to focus on engaging members, harnessing the knowledge of the NLC to build and retain membership and helping the chapters apply the knowledge of this group.

Next on the agenda was Ron Rhodes, chair of the Embrace-A-Stream (EAS) Committee and the New Initiatives Workgroup with two nominees for elections for outgoing EAS members. Ron updated the grants awarded to applicants. There were 10 applications of which seven were fully funded; two partially funded and one was asked to re-do the application and submit again next year. He also stated that the funding was down from \$120,000 in 2022 to \$80,000. We held elections for the open positions. The Southeast Region nominee was Jeff Durniak, with him replacing Tom McInnis, and the Southwest Region nominee was Bill Finney, replacing Eddie Burke. Both were voted in unanimously.

In March we held a town-hall meeting to review the effectiveness of the NLC. Rich opened with a reminder about the new tool for membership recruitment and retention, and that chapters should be utilizing it. The role of the NLC under TU's bylaws has three purposes: establish the National Conservation agenda, facilitate implementation of the National Conservation agenda and build the organizational capacity of TU.

Goals include identifying a national network of shared priority waters for native and wild trout and salmon, and a plan to fix them; create and expand a diverse core of staff, volunteers and partnerships to advocate for and participate in the care and recovery of our lands and water; invest in staff, volunteers and partners so we have the tools, technology, training and resources necessary to achieve our shared goals.

The meeting was turned over to the GRWG. Their mission is to "Continuously assess and assist effectiveness of our chapters and councils and develop tools and resources for improvement." They also help develop new charter models to meet TU needs.

We went over the results of the survey NLC members took in November 2023. The survey was used to re-assess the NLC in general. It also was used to give an organizational understanding of the NLC and its mission, assess the changes from the 2014 survey, and gauge the NLC's ability to

support TU's strategic plan.

After evaluation of the survey the WG developed a problem statement. They concluded that the problem confronting the NLC is that it is not in alignment of today's TU and the NLC's role is not fully understood. The WG broke this down into possible 3 solutions. Governance – develop a 4-person executive committee to assist the NLC chair and secretary in the managing of the NLC. Workgroups – analyze the existing workgroups and re-align them with today's TU. NLC Role – create accountability so they can work better with the council and chapters. They are hoping to have these in place by the NLC meeting in September 2024. The last thing on this was the NLC members are to call our Council Chairs and discuss the 81-page report to make sure everyone is on the same page.

The annual meeting in St. Paul and an in-person NLC Retreat have been postponed. This is likely due to budget restraints and the need for more resources, and the staff felt that they couldn't host these events at the level they would prefer. Both events will be held via Zoom meetings. There will be more information to come on times and links for these Zoom meetings.

—Linn Beck - NLC Representative

Training continues for conservation canines



ERNIE AND BETTY WHITE ARE BECOMING MASTER SNAIL SNIFFERS

By Ellen Voss, Climate Resilience Director, River Alliance of Wisconsin

Since 2020, efforts have been underway to train the finder/keeper teams at Conservation Dogs Collective, Inc. to sniff out New Zealand mudsnails in Wisconsin's trout streams. Because of their small size and life-history adaptations, NZMS could be the poster child for the perfect invasive species, and traditional methods of detecting these snails have proven to be costly and time-consuming. If dogs can be

trained to detect these snails when population densities are still low, this method could become an invaluable early detection technique and guide efforts to limit their further spread.

For the latest round of training to commence, thousands of snails needed to be collected from each of two known mudsnail locations in south-central Wisconsin. While these snails aren't too hard to find in spring and summer, I wasn't sure how easy the task would be in winter. But finding several thousand snails proved to be relatively easy



DEDICATED SNAIL-SORTING TEAM

Volunteers helped to identify and pick out the tiny rice-sized snails from the mud and vegetation.

once I knew where to look. At the two sample collection locations on Badger Mill Creek and Black Earth Creek, snails were tightly grouped together in massive colonies right along the shoreline on the undersides of rocks and pavers. With relatively little effort, we had thousands of samples in hand in a short amount of time.

To remove any competing environmental scent, the snails needed to be individually picked from the

mud and vegetation and then cleaned in distilled water. The herculean task was accomplished in a matter of hours by dedicated supporters who volunteered their time at a snail-picking party hosted by our partner organization, the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association.

The snails are now in the hands of the CDCI finder/keeper teams, and training will commence this spring. Stay tuned for updates on this project.

Engineering students continue to improve light trap

By Mike Miller

UW-Madison engineering students continue development of an autonomous lighted insect trap for Assessing the Ecological Conditions of Streams

In 2023 four senior UW-Madison mechanical engineering students designed and built an insect light trap prototype for monitoring adult aquatic insects. In 2024 Seniors Kade Wilson, Meng Moua, Alex Tanner and Carter Johnson are advancing the effort.

LED lights attract insects

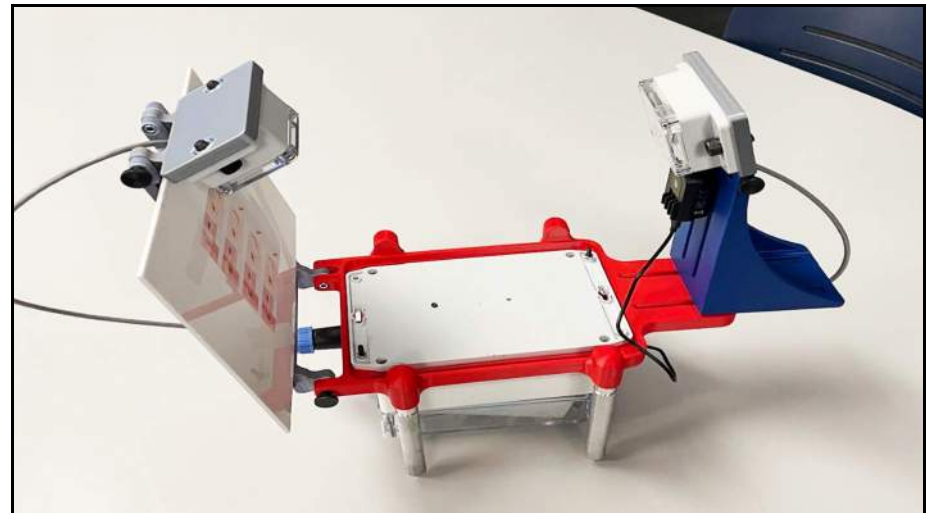
The device uses ultraviolet LED lights to attract insects to a photo stage at night, and a camera and microcomputer collect and process digital images of the insects. Insect imagery and other data will be stored on the device and accessible remotely via a cellular link. The engineers will continue to focus on device functionality and stability using most of the electrical components and operational configuration of the initial prototype and plan a major structural redesign to improve field

ruggedness and ease of deployment.

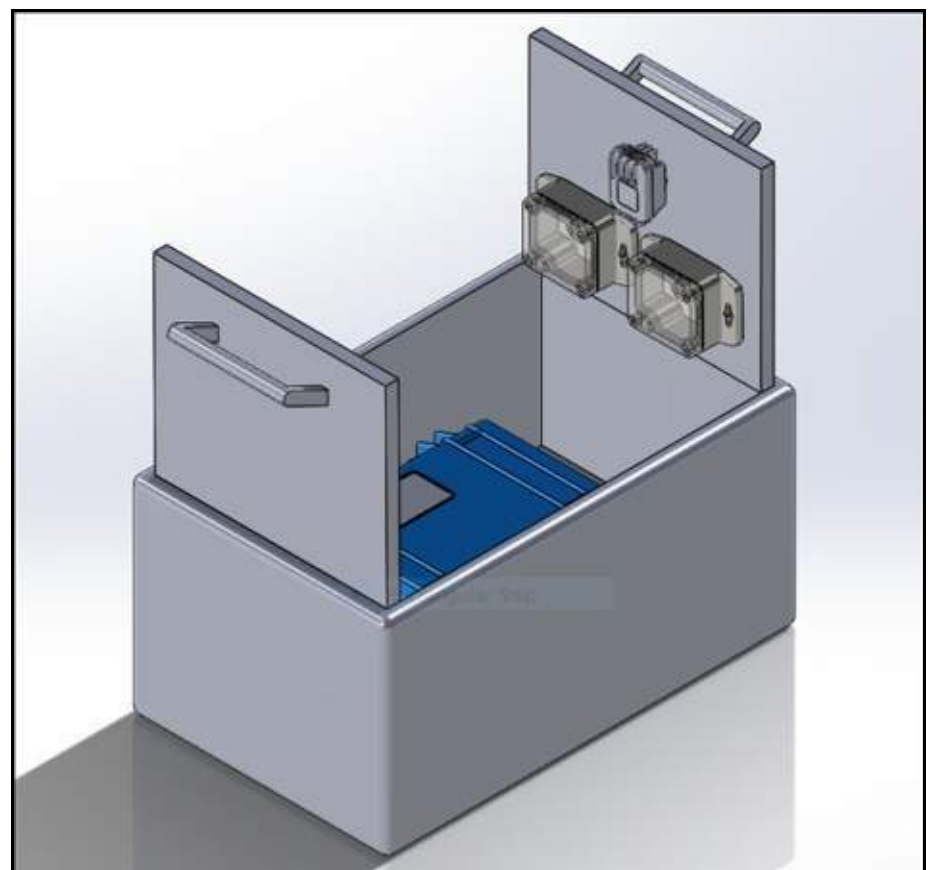
Additional refinements being considered include sensors for air temperature, humidity and wind speed, since these environmental factors strongly influence insect activity. The students are working with stream scientists investigating what adult aquatic insect taxa are drawn to light traps, how representative these taxa are of entire stream invertebrate assemblages and are exploring what biological indexes of stream health can be developed to interpret the trap data.

“Deep learning” model

Insect images collected will be used to train a “deep learning” model to identify and quantify insect orders and perhaps finer levels of taxonomic identification. A goal for this semester is to build an advanced prototype for summer field testing. The students receive guidance from Mechanical Engineering Professor Graham Wabiszewski and Mike Miller of the Department of Natural Resources.



CURRENT INSECT LIGHT TRAP PROTOTYPE



REVISED PROTOTYPE TO IMPROVE RUGGEDNESS AND EASE OF USE



INSECT LIGHT TRAP DESIGNERS KADE, MENG, CARTER AND ALEX

ESSAY:

Home water

Author Bob Luck reflects on the past, present and future of the iconic Lower and Upper Kinni, from the health of the river and its inhabitants to its status as trout a fishery and the future of its remaining dams.



WEeping CLIFFS AT MIKE MILLER'S FARM

By Bob Luck

Mike Miller and I got out of my car at the state park lot, pulled on our waders and started fishing upstream. We wanted to fish the entire lower Kinni from the mouth at the St. Croix up to the Powell Dam. At seven river miles, that was far too much to cover in a day, but we had worked out a plan to fish it in seven sections, each of which had public access or a cooperative landowner at the walk-in and walk-out.

Today's section was from the County Highway F bridge up to Mike's farm. It had been a long, cold winter, but the early April morning was hinting at spring with partly cloudy skies, temps in the low 50s and pesky gusts of wind. A few hundred yards upstream from the bridge, Mike found a tongue of current patiently eating away at a cliff. With equal patience, he tightlined a beadhead pheasant tail through the run with his Tenkara rod and pulled in several fish without spooking the others.

I watched him for a while and then wandered upstream to the remnants of a dam that I had read about in a copy of a memoir that Mike's wife Susan had given to me. Entitled "Clifton Hollow," it was written by Lucille Creswell, who had been born on the farm in 1915 and grew up there until she moved to Oregon in the 1930s. When Mike and Susan bought the farm in the early 1990s, they became friends with one of Lucille's descendants, who gave them a copy of the manuscript.

Clifton Hollow was the name given to the settlement established around the dam in 1849. Lucille's memoir noted that at its peak, it included "seven houses, a flour and feed mill, blacksmith shop, coopers shop, a shoemaker, lime kiln, millinery shop, general store and a Good Templar's Lodge."

According to Mike, the residents would release water from the dam to allow a steamboat to chug up from the St. Croix, load up with flour and ride the current back down to deliver it to market. The great flood of 1899 washed away the town and destroyed the dam. Lucille's parents purchased 192 acres in 1912. They built a house and barn on top of the ridge and pastured dairy cattle all the way down to the abandoned dam.

Lucille and her siblings loved to fish, as this story explains:

"When the spring runoff was over and the creek was running normally again, it was not long until the fishing season opened, which at that time was May 1. We were even allowed to skip school that day, the only time Pa and Ma let us miss, unless we were sick. The water was still cold, so the suckers and bullheads we caught were firm and good eating. We did lots of talking and planning for that day but the only equipment we really needed was a hook and line. There were plenty of willow poles to cut along the river bank and plenty of rocks for sinkers.

"Later that afternoon the sun came out and it was pleasantly warm as several of us walked along the creek wondering where we should try our luck. Suddenly Lynn called out, "Holy Cow! Look at those fish." There in the shallows was a school of huge fish moving along together. No discussion was needed. We automatically kicked off our shoes and jumped in to catch them. There were enough of us to surround them so we caught several in our hands and tossed them out on the bank. Dorothy and Loyal, the little kids, stayed on shore and gathered them into a pile. We learned later the fish were carp on their way to spawn and weren't any good to eat."

Clearer and colder today

The Kinni runs cleaner and colder than it did in Lucille's childhood. Streamside pastures on the lower river are long gone, replaced by forest. Upstream from River Falls, the watershed is still heavily farmed, but riparian buffers and better agricultural practices have reduced runoff. Springs that were clogged with silt are flowing again. In 1963, the City of River Falls installed a state-of-the-art sewage plant which nearly eliminated the flow of raw sewage and other effluents into the river. At one point, there were nine dams on the river. Now there are only two, both in River Falls.

Upstream of the abandoned dam, the river is wide, shallow and choked with sand. But as it flows over the timbers, the water funnels into two deep channels that practically shout "big fish live here." I drifted a beadhead nymph through the channels and picked up a couple



THE SCENIC LOWER KINNI

of fish. I tried closer to the dam, figuring they may be holding in the timber remnants, but all I managed to do was donate a few.

While we were eating our sandwiches, we first heard, and then saw, a fisher trot through the bare woods a hundred feet above the stream. In the early afternoon a sparse hatch of blue-wing olives appeared, and we managed to catch a few fish on dries before exiting the stream at the Otter hole and walking halfway up the hill to Mike's ATV for the ride back to his house. We preferred to save our energy for fishing, not hiking.

Before he retired, Mike grew prairie seeds that he sold for use in restoration projects. The prairie still covers most of the farm, together with some oak savannah and a mixture of native trees in the gorge. A few huge white pines grace steep cliffs in the gorge. They must have been too much trouble for 19th-century loggers to bother with.

Mike burns the prairie every other year and diligently roots out the buckthorn, wild parsnip and other invasive species that encroach on his farm.

I got Mike turned on to Tenkara fishing, and he loves its simplicity and effectiveness. He has gone from fishing two or three times a season to two or three times a week. I am surprised that Susan is still civil to me.

Summer flashes by as quickly for anglers as it does for schoolchildren, and we didn't finish our project until September. We walked from Glen Park down to a long riffle that I had named the "1516" after a few consecutive days of catching fish in that size range on nymphs the previous summer.

Not today. We struck out on nymphs but were able to pick up a few smaller fish on hoppers as we worked our way back up to Glen Park. The wind was gusty, just like that day back in April when we had started, and the air temperature topped out in the 60s. Fortunately, the wind was at our back or we would never have been able to get those bulky hoppers over the trout with our Tenkara rods.

Technically, we didn't quite finish our project. It was a hot day when

we fished the state park stretch, and we skipped the final half-mile where the river slows and widens into a slough before emptying into the St. Croix. But anglers are renowned liars, so it seems appropriate to gloss over the details and claim victory. We definitely covered a lot of water we hadn't fished before.

I had thought that Mike's farm was the best stretch of the river, but we found two other spots that are at least as good. If you are expecting me to share them here, dream on.

Partial to the lower Kinni...

In case you hadn't noticed, I am partial to the Lower Kinni. I love the spring water dripping from moss-covered limestone cliffs, the remnants of boreal forest clinging to shaded ledges where snowdrifts linger until May and the kettles of turkey vultures ride the thermals overhead all summer long.

...but many love the upper Kinni

I have friends who are equally obsessed with the Upper Kinni, which flows smoothly for 15 miles through picturesque Wisconsin farmland before dropping into the Driftless Area in River Falls. Huge springs keep the water temperature constant. During a summer heat wave when afternoon water temperatures on the lower river push into the 70s, the Upper Kinni will barely reach 60.

Wetlands and glacial sand deposits absorb rainfall and release water steadily into the river. A two-inch thunderstorm that turns the Lower Kinni into chocolate milk barely creates a stain here. Fish rise eagerly to prolific hatches of blue-winged olives, caddis and sulfurs that dwarf the spotty hatches on the lower river. There is a DNR parking lot or fishing easement at practically every bridge.

An angler on the upper river can be on the water and catch a half-dozen fish before an angler on the lower river finishes hiking into the canyon. I see their point, and I spend plenty of time on the Upper Kinni myself.



UPPER KINNI FEATURES MORE OPEN COUNTRY

During summer heat waves when other trout streams are starting to feel like a bass pond by late afternoon, I head to the Upper Kinni near where it crosses under Interstate 94 and wade wet through a 30-yard riffle stretch where I can usually pick up a couple of fish. By the time I reach the top of the riffle, my feet are numb.

The Upper Kinni warms up in a hurry after it passes under the Division Street bridge in downtown River Falls and enters Lake George, the impoundment created when the Junction Falls were dammed in the early 1900s to electrify downtown. The dam still generates electricity: a whopping 1 percent of the city's annual consumption. A hundred years of sediment buildup have turned the lake into a shallow, weedy heat sink, the last refuge of what may be the descendants of the carp that Lucille Creswell and her siblings chased after.

After passing over the dam, the river flows into a second impoundment, Lake Louise. Or at least it did until June 2020 when a flood damaged the Powell dam, which formed the lake. As a safety measure, the city drew down the water in Lake Louise, and the river flows free through high, unstable banks of accumulated sediment topped by an assortment of weeds.

Trout returning

The less-than-scenic view hasn't stopped the trout from returning; I have seen photos of a couple of 20-inch browns pulled out of that stretch since the reservoir was drawn down. Last summer I caught my first-ever brook trout on the Lower Kinni. It was a fat 10-inch fish that rose to a hopper. I like to think that it tumbled in from the South Fork, a brook trout stream that flows over its own falls and into the Kinni above the Powell Dam.

Kent Johnson, a retired water resources professional and member of the Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter, has measured temperatures on the Kinni for decades. He found that summertime stream temperatures were about five degrees higher below Powell Dam than in the upper river before entering Lake George. Half of that differential disappeared in 2021, after Lake Louise was drawn down.

It will be a long game, but both dams are on the way out. In 2015

"Free the Kinni" posters started appearing on lawns and driveways. Public pressure for removal of the dams swelled, and in 2019, the River Falls City Council passed a resolution to remove the Powell Dam by 2025 and the Junction Falls Dam by 2045. But city council members were not lining up to raise taxes on their voters.

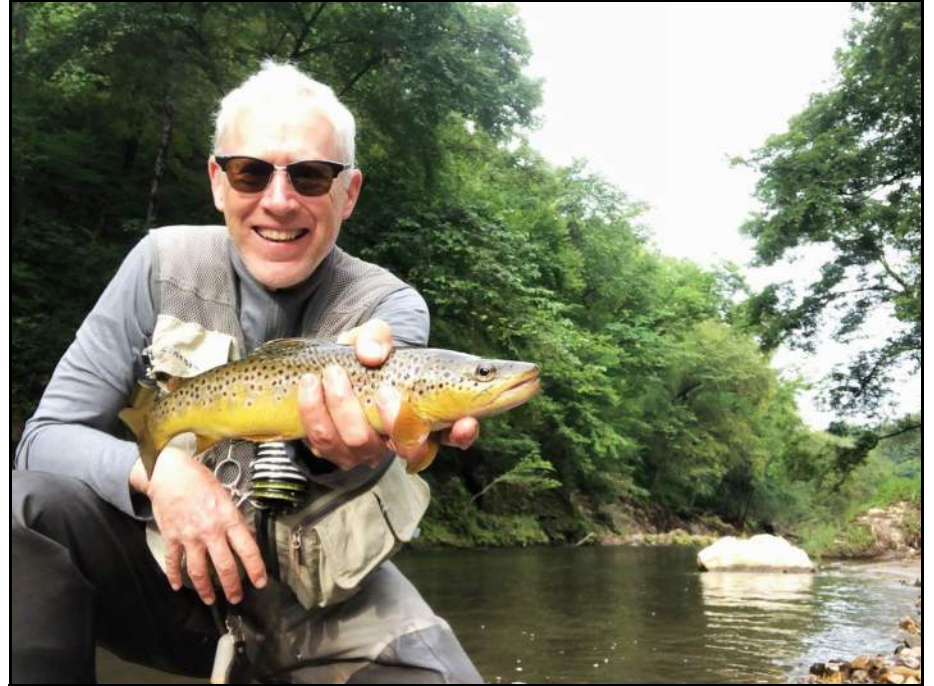
The council did support the creation of a non-profit, Kinni Corridor Collaborative (KinniCC), to raise money and provide technical assistance. KinniCC is led by Judie Foster Babcock, a descendant of Joel Foster, the first European settler in the Kinnickinnic Valley. Judie hasn't fished the Kinni since she was a child, perhaps because she has been too busy working on protecting the river. It is personal for her: her ancestors benefited from the river and contributed to its degradation; she feels responsible for restoring it.

KinniCC was starting to gain traction when Mother Nature provided an assist with the 2020 flood. It forced the drawdown of Lake Louise, and created a sense of urgency to remove the Powell Dam. Fundraising efforts began to pay off, with the awarding of a \$1 million grant from the Wisconsin DNR and several hundred thousand dollars raised from the community. Much of that, I am proud to say, came from TU members.

In 2022 the city agreed to appoint the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do a feasibility study for a proposal to remove both dams, restore the riparian corridor and manage that 100 years' worth of sediment buildup. Provided the Corps' proposal is accepted, this will bring up to \$10 million in federal funding (on a 65/35 cost sharing basis with the city). The Corps' proposal is expected to be submitted by this summer and voted upon shortly thereafter. Although there is still the matter of raising the cost-share funds, I am optimistic that we will break ground in 2025.

Dams not the only threat

Invasive species are an ongoing threat. Mike's farm borders a pris-



AUTHOR BOB LUCK WITH A BEAUTIFUL KINNI BROWN

tine stretch of river, and he works hard to keep it that way, but last year he finally gave up on fighting garlic mustard because it spreads too fast for a single human to keep up with. Dense stands of buckthorn line the banks on stretches, creating erosion-susceptible ecological deserts. Phragmites, a warm-weather grass that grows up to 20 feet tall in dense stands and crowds out native vegetation, is now established near the dam.

Urban expansion is another danger. Aerial photos from the 1930s compared to those in 2023 show some bright spots, especially the increase in forest cover along the banks of the Kinni and its tributaries. However, as you zoom out, the picture is more disturbing. A photo of River Falls from 1939 shows a one-square-mile grid of streets centered around the Junction Falls dam, beyond which are farm fields.

In 2023, the grid is still there, but the town has spread. Thousand of acres of fields have been replaced by parking lots, rooftops and squiggly roads terminating in cul de sacs.

To the northwest, housing developments spread out from Hudson along Highway 35, threatening to link up with the sprawl emanating from River Falls. There is less development to the northeast, but how long before it's only a 25-minute drive from the intersection of Highway 65 and I-94 to downtown St. Paul?

River Falls' chief industries these days are education and health care, which tend to be more river-friendly than cutting logs and milling wheat. But now there are more lawns and parking lots near the stream, and it rarely turns out well for the trout.

The possibility of increased groundwater withdrawal for agricul-

ture, and the extreme flooding and drought expected from climate change and the challenges facing the Kinni sometimes appear exhausting. I can't say with confidence that trout will be thriving there in 50 or 100 years. But I am certain that if it does remain a trout stream, it will be thanks to the people who treat it like a home.

The Kinni only has a fighting chance because so many residents of the St. Croix Valley, the Twin Cities and beyond treat it like a home. These are people like Mike Miller, Kent Johnson and Judie Babcock. In 1993 a group of landowners along the Lower Kinni formed the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust. Shortly after, the trust received its first two conservation easement donations, and has since protected nearly 10 miles of riverbank through easements and land purchases. One of the easements is on Mike's farm. Together with public lands and DNR easements, nearly 90 percent of the river corridor is under permanent protection. Protecting the corridor will not guarantee the Kinni's future as a trout stream. Watershed-scale groundwater infiltration is needed for that, but it's a good start.

It's possible that the most lasting environmental impact of the dam project won't be the thermal impact, the sediment control or the new migration corridor. It may instead be the passion that a beautiful, wild river generates in the hearts of those who come near, inspiring them to do the endless work needed to protect it for future generations. Three million people live within an hour's drive of the Kinni. That makes it a dangerous neighborhood for a trout stream, but if enough of them treat it like a home, we may just avoid screwing things up a second time.

Meanwhile, I am making plans to celebrate my 70th Birthday in April 2031, fishing the Kinni just downstream from the Falls. Hopefully with a grandchild beside me, but that is out of my control.

The Kinni only has a fighting chance because so many residents of the St. Croix Valley, the Twin Cities and beyond treat it like a home.



ERODED BANKS ABOVE THE POWELL FALLS DAM



RIGGING UP NEAR THE POWELL FALLS DAM

Tell Congress to pass the GLRI Act of 2024



ties that rely on them continue to benefit from robust federal investments so future generations can enjoy clean water, quality recreation opportunities, a strong economy and healthy watersheds.

Thanks to the Wisconsin champions of this bill, including Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Reps. Gwen Moore (D-WI) and Bryan Steil (R-WI).

Your voice can make a difference. Write to your legislators today to urge them to support the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024, or thank them for being sponsors.

Scan the QR code with your

phone's camera or visit www.tu.org/conservation/action-center today. It just takes a few minutes.



By Jamie Vaughan, TU's Great Lakes Engagement Coordinator

Thanks to a new bipartisan bill introduced by members of the Great Lakes Taskforce, Congress has an opportunity to reauthorize the successful federal program for five more years (through 2031) and secure a critical increase in investment up to \$500 million annually.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Act of 2024 will put the program on solid footing so that the GLRI can continue to support fish and wildlife habitat restoration, boost climate change resilience, reduce farm runoff and

prevent and manage invasive species.

Wisconsin advocates know that the GLRI has resulted in major conservation wins for the region's freshwater resources, funding watershed restoration projects in the Brule, Peshtigo and Oconto River watersheds to name a few. Because of GLRI investments, more than 6,000 river miles have been opened by the removal of dams and barriers and more than 460,000 acres of habitat, including 65,000 acres of coastal wetlands, have been protected and restored in the Great Lakes.

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Five years after “The Big One”

An update on the status of the streams and dams in the West Fork Kickapoo River and Coon Creek watersheds five years after disastrous floods.

Words and photos By Jason Freund,
Coulee Region Chapter

The 2018 floods in our part of the Driftless Area were historic by any measure, and this is in a place where flood events have become more frequent and severe. It has been nearly six years since up to 14 inches of rain fell on the ridge that separates the West Fork of the Kickapoo River watershed from the Coon Creek/Timber Coulee watershed and resulted in unprecedented floods. Five dams, including the Jersey Valley dam on the headwaters of the West Fork, failed, exacerbating the effects of the floods. The aftermath of the floods is still seen in Coon Valley, Chaseburg, Bloomingdale and Avalanche, and along the streams and their floodplains. Damage in the area was estimated at \$14 million. I still find it quite amazing that no loss of life occurred from the floods, although they drastically altered many people's lives.

Effects of the floods linger today. Several houses no longer exist, though we can question the wisdom of allowing people to build in the floodplain to begin with. But progress is being made there. You may have been to the new Avalanche County Park which is where several homes once stood in the tiny town of Avalanche. The story is the same in several other towns along Coon Creek and the West Fork, as well as the mainstem of the Kickapoo River.

Sometimes it is rather frustrating how slowly things happen, particularly after the initial cleanup efforts were so swift and productive. People came together and within days and weeks, the landscape started to look a good bit more like it did pre-flood. It was rather amazing to volunteer my time and watch how there were people everywhere helping out friends, neighbors and strangers. Though that is not to say that things were back to normal but, in general, they have gotten much better through a lot of effort.

In the aftermath of the floods, the Coon Creek Watershed Council was formed to deal with issues – including flood risk – in their watershed. They have made great strides at improving land-use practices and finding ways to compensate land-

owners for conservation practices like planting cover crops, contour strips, grade stabilization structures and more. Over the watershed divide, the West Fork Sports Club put a ton of work into getting the clubhouse and grounds functioning. A new “tiny house” cabin replaced the old blue cabin that was destroyed in the 2018 floods. And the campground is back to normal, perhaps even better. It is nice to see some small wins.

However, it has been a tale of two watersheds. Your inland trout stamp dollars and some funds from Coulee Region TU and other organizations have been used to repair flood damage to Bohemian Valley, Spring Coulee, Timber Coulee and Rullands Coulee creeks in the Coon Creek watershed. There is still damage created by floods along these streams, but they have been in very good shape. Given the incredibly productive environment through which they flow, they have rebounded quickly. As someone who fishes these streams more than just about anyone else, I can say that they have been fishing great since the flood, even in the heat and weeds of this past summer.

The same cannot be said for the West Fork of the Kickapoo River. Five years later, Jersey Valley Lake is currently at 26 acres, historically the lake was 57 acres. Most significantly, without the lake being deep enough for the bottom-draw dam to keep the river below it cool, the river has never been warmer and is often well above temperatures suitable for trout.

The West Fork has experienced five rough years since the dam failures. The river always got warm in warm summers, but nothing like we have seen these past five years. I have never recorded higher temperatures on the West Fork than I have in the past five years. My current record is 79°F, but I know others who have measured up to 81°F. I have recorded early morning temperatures, after an evening of cooling, above 70°F.

I still use the West Fork Sports Club as a base camp, however, in recent years, I rarely fish the river itself. This is especially true from the campground up to the dam, the area most affected by Jersey Valley's cur-



THE SITE WHERE JERSEY VALLEY LAKE ONCE EXISTED

A recent aerial image of the Jersey Valley Lake site. The current and former lake size are quite evident. Source: USDA NAIP Online Viewer.

rent state. From my own and others' experiences, the fish have gotten smaller and less numerous, but you would expect that given the river's thermal issues that are aggravated by the Jersey Valley Dam situation.

While the West Fork has been on the decline, there are plans to rectify the situation. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been actively working on plans to remove 14 dams in the Coon Creek Watershed and eight dams in the West Fork Kickapoo Watershed. This would begin with the removal of five dams that are ranked as high-hazard dams. The plan also includes rebuilding the Jersey Valley dam downstream approximately 1,000 feet from the current dam. The construction of a new Jersey Valley dam was proposed due to a high benefit-to-cost ratio and public input that supported the recreational value of the lake.

Public meetings were held in Coon Valley and Cashton in January about the proposed plans and their alternatives. Draft Watershed Plan and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements were created for each watershed and more information is available at: <https://www.wfkandccwatersheds.com/>.

Comments have closed recently and there will be a 30-to-45-day window for the NRCS to respond to comments. The plan could be part of the federal register as soon as April 1, and a decision on the plan would be made within 30 days. Dam decommissioning is scheduled for 2025 and 2026. I have not seen a

timeframe for the construction of the new Jersey Valley dam, but would assume its completion would be in 2026 at the earliest. Cost of the projects in the Coon Creek Watershed are approximately \$4.4 million, whereas work in the West Fork Watershed will be nearly \$25.5 million with about \$16 million associated with the Jersey Valley dam construction. The planning process adds another \$1.6 million dollars to these costs. These costs, of course, are subject to change.

Coulee Region Trout Unlimited organized a campaign to inform the planning process about the importance of the Seas Branch and Maple Dale brook trout restoration sites this winter. Original plans are to “V-notch” all the dams which would almost certainly allow brown trout to recolonize these brook trout restoration sites. The DNR and others have put a huge amount of time and effort into the restoration of native brook trout which would almost certainly be lost to invasive brown trout.

With the help of fisheries biologist Kirk Olson, we are working to ensure that barriers to brown trout encroachment remain at those sites, as well as Jersey Valley. In reviewing some fisheries data from Kirk, the density of brook trout in these restoration sites are some of the highest in the state. It would be a major blow to the area to lose these unique, native brook trout populations.



SPORTS CLUB'S OLD BLUE CABIN DIDN'T SURVIVE THE 2018 FLOODS

It has been replaced with a “tiny house” cabin on a trailer that can be moved out of harm's way.



BEAUTIFUL WEST FORK TRIBUTARY BROOKIE

A brook trout from one of the West Fork of the Kickapoo River tributaries. These brook trout restoration sites have some of the highest brook trout densities anywhere in the state.

Searching for Apache trout

Author embarks on an adventure in Arizona to catch this most resilient trout species.



POOL ON LITTLE COLORADO RIVER HELD APACHE TROUT

By staying far from the stream and draping a cast over this type of bank, I avoided spooking the fish and managed to catch two Apache Trout and lose two others.

Words and photos by John Lyons,
University of Wisconsin Zoological
Museum, Madison

When you say you're traveling to Arizona, trout fishing doesn't immediately come to mind. But there I was in October of 2023, heading southwest, fly rod in hand, on an adventure to capture the state fish of Arizona, the Apache trout (*Oncorhynchus apache*). This rare relative of the rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) occurs naturally only high in the White Mountains of east-central Arizona near the New Mexico border.

Like many western fishes, the apache trout has declined sharply during the last 125 years, but things have been looking up recently. Historically, the species was found in approximately 600 miles of mountain streams down to about 6,000 feet elevation, but by the 1960s it had been reduced to only 30 miles, all above 7,000 feet.

The cause was a combination of water diversions, habitat destruction from overgrazing by livestock, competition with non-native brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) and brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) and hybridization with rainbow trout.

The apache trout was one of the first species to be officially listed under the federal Endangered Species legislation of 1967 and 1973, initially as endangered but eventually as threatened in 1975. Since then, major conservation efforts have gradually improved the distribution and abundance of the species, and there are proposals now, nearly 50 years later, to finally remove it from the threatened list.

Credit tribe for recovery

Much of the credit for the apache trout's recovery must go to the White Mountain Apache Tribe on whose reservation most of the remaining streams are located. The tribe was the first entity to really focus on the protection and recovery of the species. They closed many of their streams to fishing, began removing non-native trout, excluded livestock from stream banks, improved instream habitat and initiated a hatchery program to propagate fish for re-introduction.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, which is responsible for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest adjacent to the reservation and the state of Arizona Game and Fish Department soon began similar efforts on the streams they managed, often in collaboration with the Apache Tribe.

In some cases, stream reaches that had lost their Apache Trout were poisoned to remove non-native trout and hybrids, a barrier to non-native recolonization from downstream was constructed and pure Apache trout were reintroduced. These efforts have led to the current status of 30 distinct and genetically pure self-sustaining Apache trout populations occupying about 175 miles of stream, which achieves the criteria for delisting under the Endangered Species Act Apache Trout Recovery Plan.

Still at risk

Despite this recent improvement, the Apache trout is still at risk. A warming climate has meant less snow and higher summer temperatures in the White Mountains, which will ultimately reduce the



COLORADO ASPENS

Aspens changing color in a burned area of Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest between the West Fork of the Little Colorado River and Corduroy Creek.



WEST FORK OF THE LITTLE COLORADO RIVER

amount of suitable habitat. In the shorter term, more frequent and severe forest fires can quickly eliminate populations.

For example, the 2011 Wallow Fire destroyed several Apache trout streams initially through post-fire ash and debris runoff that directly killed many Apache trout and then subsequently through washout of the barriers that had prevented non-native trout colonization, which led to the survivors being outcompeted or lost via hybridization. Even if the Apache trout were to be taken off the threatened list, ongoing vigilance and active management will be required to maintain the species.

Starting in Albuquerque

This was what I knew about Apache trout when I began my trip. I flew into Albuquerque, rented a car, and drove four hours on lonely dark roads to a motel in Eager, Arizona, arriving late at night. The next morning, I made the hour or so drive into the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest and my prime destination, the West Fork of the Little

Colorado River. The Little Colorado system originates in the White Mountains and flows north and west to enter the Colorado River in the upper part of the Grand Canyon.

A contact at the Arizona Game and Fish Department had told me that the West Fork was the best self-sustaining Apache Trout population outside of the reservation, and that the best reservation streams were closed to fishing. He had sent me a video made the summer before of him catching several beautiful Apache trout on dry flies from the West Fork, a pretty willow-lined stream, so I was optimistic.

I arrived at the stream access point early in the morning on a weekday and was happy to find that I was the only one there. It was a bright, beautiful fall day, although the wind was howling, blowing continuously at about 20 mph with gusts exceeding 40 mph. The stream was low and crystal clear and looked great, although thick bankside willows made the area near the access impossible to fish.

See **APACHE**, page 24



HYBRID APACHE TROUT-RAINBOW TROUT FROM CORDUROY CREEK



AUTHOR'S FIRST APACHE TROUT, FROM THE LITTLE COLORADO RIVER



Chapter News

Aldo Leopold Chapter

We have a lot of exciting things going on including an April 13 brushing work day on Dell Creek starting at 9 a.m. at the DNR parking area where Dell Creek meets South Avenue, a couple miles north of Highway 23. Our chapter picnic is 5 p.m. June 5 at Habermann Park in Lodi, with dinner at 6 p.m. A picnic highlight is a raffle for a custom fly rod by renowned rod builder Paul Julius. If you are unable to attend but are interested in the bamboo rod, contact Dan Endres for more information.

We are also very excited and honored to have won the Stihl equipment grant. We will have a large workday with members of the Stihl crew at Dell Creek on September 19, and will need lots of help to maximize what we can accomplish with that many experts from Stihl leading the way. Mark it on your calendar now, and we will provide further details in the summer issue.

Our TU Brew coffee fundraiser continues and we would love to share this great blend with TU members from throughout the state. This is a collaboration with our local coffee roaster, John Joseph Coffee out of Sauk City, and is roasted (and ground if needed) to order, so you can get the freshest coffee found anywhere. The coffee is a medium/dark roast that is approachable to all coffee drinkers, and is a mix of dark roast Nicaragua, sweet Papua New Guinea and heavy medium dark Sumatra. Each 1-pound bag is \$16 and a significant portion of that goes directly to our chapter. We will have coffee available for purchase at our work day, picnic and also most weeks this summer at the Meyer Oak Grove Farmers Market in Sauk City. Contact Dan Endres at dtendres9@gmail.com or call/text at 608-963-1374.

—Dan Endres

Antigo Chapter

We held our 41st fundraising banquet last month, with about 200 people. Our chapter cannot thank our community enough for their longstanding support our coldwater resources. I'm very happy to say we have sent in the money to the appropriate agencies, based on what we pledged at the Council's northeast regional meeting in December.

We recently toured the five schools participating in the TIC

program, including Antigo, Bowler and Wittenberg-Birnamwood high schools and All Saints and Peace Lutheran elementary schools.

We're planning work projects for this summer and we're getting ready for our annual Kid's Fishing Day Saturday June 1 at the City of Antigo's park. This is always a great day of fishing, contests, prizes and food for all.

—Scott Henricks

Blackhawk Chapter

Our monthly meetings have been well attended all winter. Everyone enjoys getting together and having some good food and lively discussions. Though we haven't had any speakers, we have viewed some good films from fishing to rod making. The Wednesday fly-tying group tied boxes for the State Council banquet and have been working on tying for the Blackhawk Banquet on Monday, April 15, 2024 at Boundaries Bar and Grill in Beloit.

Chapter tyers will be at the sale/swap sponsored by The Gathering

Place Fishing Club in Milton in April. We hope to spread the word about TU, our banquet and help raise money for the conservation work the fishing club does in our area.

We have voted to again sponsor several youth for the TU Youth camp. Supporting this outstanding opportunity for youth is becoming one or our chapter's core missions. We hope to continue supporting by sending mentors to help at the camp when needed.

—Dave Brethauer

Central Wisconsin Chapter

TroutFest had another fantastic turnout of members, friends and vendors. Everyone had a great day enjoying the sale of used gear, fly-tying materials and books. All enjoyed talking with the vendors and watching our presenters. Thank you to all who attended and to all the vendors and presenters for turning this into another great Troutfest.

We're gearing up for our habitat workdays the third Saturday of each month beginning in May and ending in September. They typically start at 8 a.m. with doughnuts and coffee and they typically end around noon, with a lunch provided by the chapter. We will be listing dates and locations on the website. If you would like to participate, please reach out to our Workday Coordinator Chad Tucker at chadmtucker1@gmail.com.

The Dan Harmon III Fly-Fishing School is filled, but we have a waiting list in case someone cancels. If interested contact Joe Peikert at

JoeP@WolfRiverBank.com. This year the session dates are June 1-2 at The Riverside Bible Camp on the Tomorrow River near Amherst, Wisconsin. Details are available on our website.

We have a new committee regarding our presentations. They are hard at work putting together a program itinerary and lining up presenters. We will resume our regular schedule of presentations early next year. The new itinerary will be listed on the website as soon as completed.

Please save the date of Saturday, October 19, 2024 for our chapter awards and fundraising banquet at the Oshkosh Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center in downtown Oshkosh.

Visit our website <https://central-wisconsin.org/> for information on upcoming programs and important chapter updates.

—Linn Beck



TU TEEN LEADERS AT TROUTFEST



GREAT TURNOUT AT TROUTFEST 2024



MICHAEL SAN DRETTO SHARES HIS TYING EXPERTISE AT TROUTFEST

Coulee Region Chapter

We have had sightings of Spring and Mother Nature is cooperating when she wants to here in the Coulee Region. The Driftless Area is still seeing drought conditions, so we hope to see some rain.

In January we held our annual meeting and elections. We had a good attendance, likely to hear Brandon Thill, a graduate student at UW-La Crosse. He gave a presentation about brook trout management in the Driftless Area and had some fascinating correlations. He also survived 'Stump the Graduate Student' session at the end. Brandon was also the guest speaker for the February Talking Trout presentation from the Council.

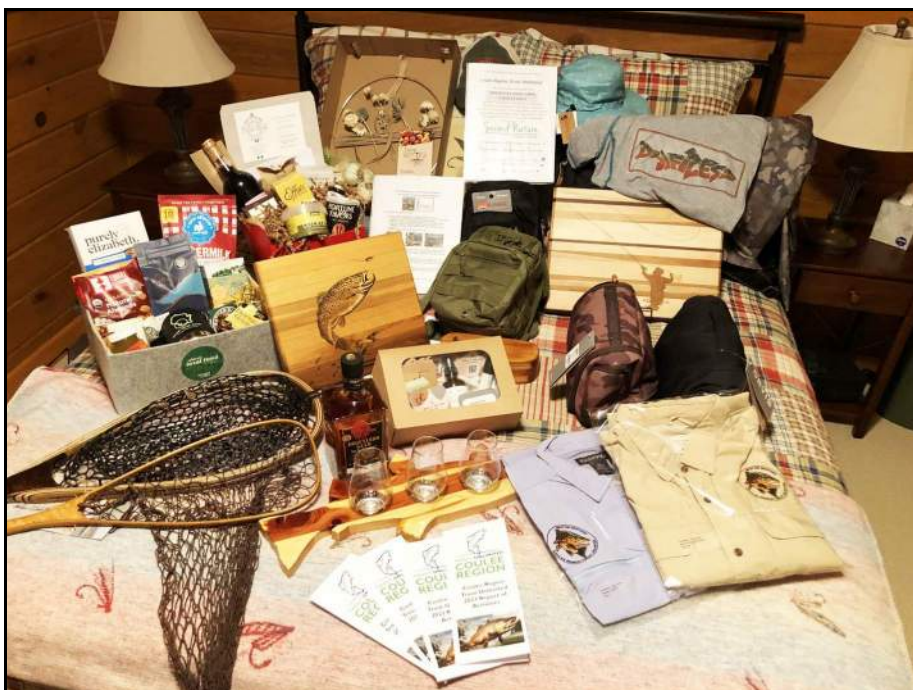
February was banquet season. Many chapter members attended the State Council awards banquet to witness Fisheries Biologist Kirk Olson accept the Robert Hunt Resource Professional Award. We are very appreciative of Kirk's efforts and all he does for our resources. Additionally, CRTU was awarded a grant of \$2,500 from Friends of Wisconsin TU to be matched by equal funds from the chapter for restoration work on Mormon Coulee Creek.

February featured our annual banquet and fundraiser, with record attendance. We auctioned more than 20 items and more than 25 bucket raffle items from our many supporters. We had some handsome fishing shirts with our CRTU 'Angry Brown Trout' logo and three fine trout rods including a hand-crafted Taylor Phenom rod built by Rick Kyte. Everyone enjoyed the food and camaraderie while raising a record amount.

Anticipated projects include continued stream reclamation work, fishing habitat improvements, TroutFest, StreamGIRLS, and matching funds for our Friends of Wisconsin TU grant for restoration work on Mormon Coulee Creek.

We are back to our membership meetings in March with Lauren Genske as speaker. Lauren is a high school junior who travelled to the TU Teen Summit in 2023. Lauren will talk about her experiences at the summit and perhaps share the name of a celebrity she would love to fish with. In April we will hear from Chris Firkus, with a presentation entitled "Fishing Streamers in the Driftless - Big Flies for Big Trout." He's going to debunk the

Chapter News



RAFFLE ITEMS GALORE FOR THE COULEE REGION FUNDRAISER

myths surrounding streamer fishing and perhaps let us peruse his fly boxes. May brings us to the end of our membership meeting season with our annual picnic in Coon Valley.

After the trout season opens, we will see everyone at the Third Thursday Market at Second Nature

at Reads Creek from May to October and the Valley Conservation Day on May 4. TroutFest is set for June 22 with some exciting new activities for community engagement and StreamGIRLS is August 10 at West Fork Sports Club in Avalanche.

—*Deb Muresan*

Fox Valley Chapter

We've been busy. January featured Cabin Fever Day at a new venue. The event had some very nice bucket raffles, great silent auction items, and some very nice used equipment for sale thanks to the donations from John Hammond and others. The event also included speakers from area fly shops. Tim Landwehr from Tight Lines spoke about the great fishing within the State of Wisconsin. Seth Waters from Dark Waters Fly shop in Iron River Michigan spoke about the trout opportunities in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and Lance Praedo from the Root River Rod Co. spoke about fishing in Minnesota's Driftless Area.

At the event we kicked off a sweepstakes for a Scott Grady bamboo rod outfit that included a reel, line, flies and a handmade net from Al Johnson. We hope this will be successful and help with our fundraising.

Members Tom Lager and Al Johnson put in a lot of time to complete the details for a Save Our Great Lakes Grant through TU CARES. Once we were approved for the grant, they also completed the paperwork needed for the grant. This grant will serve as a major source of funding for the 13th Avenue Dam removal and road crossing project on the West Branch of the

White River in Waushara County.

At our January we heard about destination trips in Patagonia and a peacock bass trip on the Rio Negro River in the Amazon River Basin. Al Johnson shared his experience on a trip where the participant flew by helicopter to remote areas of Patagonia for some guided fishing and a great time. Graeme Hodson shared his adventures fishing for Peacock Bass in the Amazon Basin of Brazil.

From January through March we host Stone Fly Socials at the Stone Yard, north of Appleton. On every other Tuesday evening we met to tie flies, share fishing information and stories and enjoy adult beverages.

In April we meet in the Driftless Area for our April Angling Adventure. This year we will gather at the Esofea Campground the third week in April.

We are looking forward to joining the Central Wisconsin Chapter for work days on the third Saturday from May through September. Since we have few trout waters we partner with Central to work on the streams in the Central Sands areas of Wisconsin. Our thanks to the Central Chapter for allowing us to assist on the stream work in the Central Sands area.

—*Tony Pudlo*

Frank Hornberg Chapter

In December, Dan Holloway gave a presentation on his recent 10-day trip to Kodiak Island, Alaska. Dan had previously lived on the island and had a ton of information on where to stream and ocean fish and where to hike on the island. His photos were amazing. I have to put this destination on my bucket list.

When Jamie Vaughan, Great Lakes Region Engagement Coordinator for Trout Unlimited, reached out and asked if our chapter would be interested in a Tie One On event at District 1 Brewing Company, I jumped at the chance. Several peo-

ple learned to tie their first fly at the event. Members from Fall Line Outfitters, UWSP-Flyfishing Club, the general public, Wisconsin River Valley and Frank Hornberg chapters participated. This was a lot of fun and I hope this can become an annual event.

February found us at the Flyfishing Film Tour in Wausau. It was well attended and the short films were stunning. We raised some money for our chapter by raffling a net, made by Charlie Preston of Friendship.

We awarded our \$500 scholarship to Jacob Roncke from UW-

Stevens Point. Jacob is from Muskego, Wisconsin and is majoring in fisheries and aquatic sciences. Congratulations, Jacob.

Join us Wednesday, April 17 at 6 p.m. at Fall Line Outfitters in Stevens Point for a talk by the DNR about trout-spawning surveys in central Wisconsin. Learn about what a redd is and how you can become involved in the surveys in October.

We would like to sponsor one child, ages 12-16, for the Trout Unlimited Youth Fishing Camp at Pine Lake Bible Camp in Waupaca, WI from August 15th-18th. We will cov-

er the entire cost for the camp. If you know of anyone who may be interested, contact Doug Erdmann at 715-712-3134.

On April 13 we are planning a trash-pick-up morning along an area stream and on April 27 we will have our trailer clean-up day. Please follow us on our Facebook page for details of our events www.facebook.com/FrankHornbergTU. Current members will be emailed with the specifics. Please make sure your email address is up to date at tu.org.

—*Doug Erdmann*

Green Bay Chapter

December featured our Awards Dinner/Holiday Party. It featured a chicken buffet including baked chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetable or baked beans, coleslaw, cranberry sauce, fresh bread with butter and assorted dessert bars. Amy Megna brought her keyboard to play and sing classic Christmas songs and other well-known favorites. We presented our 2023 awards and commenced with a drawing for about a dozen Christmas-themed door prizes, courtesy of Christina Meseberg. Nearly 50 guests came out to help celebrate.

For 2023 we recognized four amazing recipients in three award categories. Our first award of the evening was the President's Club Award, commonly given to a "new-

er" member who has demonstrated a high level of activity within the chapter. Historically this recognition has been also associated with work project participation. This award comes with a GBTU personalized clothing item of the individual's choosing. This year we recognized John Ostanek. Jon is a regular face at GBTU work projects including coming out for the Haller Creek and North Branch Beaver Creek workdays in 2023. He was a volunteer at our 47th Annual Fundraising Banquet in April and our Kid's Fishing Day in July. Jon was also at many of our meetings and is a TU life member.

The second award was for Distinguished Service, for undying contributions of time, money and talent



GBTU AWARDS DINNER ATTENDEES HAD A WONDERFUL EVENING



PAUL KRUSE (LEFT) RECEIVES GBTU MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD



Chapter News



GARY ACCEPTS SILVER TROUT AWARD FROM RANDY RAKE IN 2013



PAT HILL RECEIVES GBTU DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

for many years. This year we recognized Pat Hill for this distinct honor. Pat has been a GBTU member since 1989 and has been at nearly every GBTU work project for years, including all five of them in 2023. He has been a Banquet Committee member/banquet volunteer and a Kid's Fishing Day volunteer for years. He is a meeting regular who was also served for a long-time on our board. In the past, Pat has been recognized by GBTU as a President's Club recipient (1995), Member of the Year (1997), and Silver Trout (2012). The Distinguished Service award is almost like a GBTU Hall-of-Fame honor and Pat absolutely earned his spot.

The final award at our 2023 event was for Member of the Year and is given to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding efforts over the past. This year we recognized Randy Rake and Paul Kruse.

In 2023 Paul contributed to our GBTU mission in a multiple, large, unmistakable ways. One of these is his role as our chapter's work project chair. In this position, he helped coordinate, plan and communicate five habitat improvement days. Many of these included involving other chapters and government agencies. If that wasn't enough, he also purchases and prepares lunches for the

volunteers following the workdays. Paul has been serving our coldwater resources this way for years.

Another large part of Paul's giving to the TU community is through his position as GBTU Veteran's Service Partnership (VSP) Chair. He has been the leader of this part of our chapter for many years. The VSP program, led by Paul, includes fly-tying classes throughout the year and multiple fishing outings. He was instrumental in securing a DNR grant for our VSP program.

Paul is a meeting regular and member of our Trout Tails Educational Trail Committee. He has served the chapter on our board, and as a past president, for many years.

Randy is a GBTU life member who joined our chapter in 1992. Despite living in Montana much of the last decade, he continues to have an enormous impact on the coldwater resources of Northeast Wisconsin through GBTU. For the past three years Randy has been a very important member of our Trout Educational Trail Committee. He designed all fourteen of our signs. The content on the signs involved lots of research, and reaching out to professionals, for important information. If that wasn't enough, he cleverly came up with a theme within the theme...our educational trail

would now be a GBTU Trout "Tails" Educational Trail.

The "Tails" part is a play on words as trout physically have "tails" and the signs tell a "tale" of our clean coldwater resources and the trout that depend on them. The signs themselves have a sort of fish tail pattern that adorns the frame. This year Randy completed the final wave of eight signs. He joined us virtually for every committee meeting. He maintained a running Standards and Project Overview Word Document to keep all our sign efforts organized and on track. This also provides us with a historical piece to reference at any time in the future.

Randy, and his wife Sarah Fenton, have been sponsors of our Annual Conservation Banquet for many years. He is also a long-time designer of our posters for the event. Randy has also served the chapter on our board, and as a past president, for many years.

Both Paul and Randy join a very, very short list of GBTU members who have received the Member-of-the-Year recognition twice in their lifetime.

In February our speaker was retired DNR fisheries biologist Dave Vetrano, who shared a presentation titled "A History of the Wisconsin Driftless Area Trout Fishery & What Lies Ahead." It was fantastic. Dave is trout habitat legend. We learned a great deal about the area while enjoying several good laughs.

We continue to run our Veteran's Service Program at First Presbyterian Church in De Pere. We meet to learn fly-tying and socialize every other Monday starting at 4:30 p.m. If you are a veteran who would like to participate, or if you would like to

volunteer, please contact GBTU Veteran's Program Coordinator Paul Kruse at kruser2@new.rr.com or 920-639-2361. Volunteers and participants of all experience levels are welcome. If you have never tied a fly, or been fly-fishing, this is a very good opportunity to see if this is something you would like.

In December we brought back a unique tie where vets made flies that were then placed inside Christmas ornaments. The fly was a variation of the "Silver Doctor." Judging by the laughter, smiles, and "thank you's" it was easy to see everyone had a wonderful time.

On a more somber note, on December 26 TU lost a true coldwater conservation hero, Gary Stoycoff. Gary was one of our chapter founding members and a TU life member. He was recognized by GBTU with the President's Club Award in 1988 for outstanding work project attendance. Gary and his late wife Jan, also a TU life member, were presented our chapter's Silver Trout Award in 2013. He and Jan put together our newsletter for many years and were instrumental in starting and volunteering for our annual fundraising banquet. At last year's State Council Awards Banquet Gary received the Council's Lifetime Achievement Award. He is only the third person to ever receive this recognition. The legacy Gary leaves in the Trout Unlimited community is one that few will match.

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

—Adrian Meseberg



NOHR CHAPTER CREATED NEW SIGNS FOR ITS NEWEST STILES

Harry & Laura Nohr Chapter

We had a Lie and Tie in January. We had a talk by Phil Anderson about the origins of tying, British fly-fishing authors, tied some flies for our fly box for the state TU banquet, and shared techniques and stories.

The Grant County Outdoor Skills Day in February at SWTC was a great success. We had people

there teaching fly tying and casting and may have gained five new members.

Our Fennimore Trout in the Classroom tank is up and running. About fifty trout survived in the tanks this year.

We put up signs with QR codes on our stiles near our work areas.

—Brian Larson

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter

We kicked off 2024 with a January meeting in River Falls. Chapter member Sarah Sanford was challenged by President Greg Olson to come up with "something wonder-

ful; perhaps wild, probably wacky, but certainly wonderful. Greg told her the topic was up to her, but please just make it related to fish. Her response was an evening with

Christina Meseberg

Ted Swenson

Chapter News



BOB BUTTERBRODT WON THE "MAY ON THE RUSH" PAINTING
"May on the Rush" was donated by Joshua Cunningham.



TYING THE PINK SQUIRREL....WHILE BLINDFOLDED!

Sarah and Eben and Barbara Gillespie featuring music and photos narrated by Sarah. Eb and Barb shared their enormous repertoire of acoustic music from the 1960's to the present. The presentation was nostalgic and quite entertaining.

Our February meeting was our Dick Frantes Memorial Fly-Tying Meeting. This is a night of open fly tying and celebrating Dick. There was a good turnout with plenty of fly tying, fish tales and old friends. We presented Paul Johnson of the Twin Cities Chapter our Silver Trout award for his outstanding contributions of his exquisite flies for chapter fundraisers. Other luminaries on hand to show off tips and tricks were Jonathan Jacobs, Sarah Sanford, Bob Trevis, Ken Hanson, Scot Stewart and Randy Arnold. New this year were some fly-tying challenges, for those who wished to participate. The challenges included tying an elk hair caddis with your off hand, tying a pink squirrel blindfolded, and finally tying the MacGyver Fly with random supplies from the bottom of Greg Olson's material bin.

Kiap-TU-Wish concluded another successful auction and chance drawing on February 18, raising \$20,776 for improving trout habitat and supporting our educational and outreach programs. We thank everyone who made generous donations. Special thanks to the Norlings, Joshua Cunningham and Cabelas-Rodgers for the 3x100 items. Drawing winners were Brad

Gustafson, Tony DeRose and Bob Butterbrodt. Our auction committee did an amazing job, and included Ken Hanson, Tom Schnadt, Matt Janquart, Michele Bevis, Suzanne Constantini, Ben Belt, Jeff Himes and Allison Jacobs.

Scott Larson and Matt Janquart manned an informational booth in March at the R4F Fly Fishing Film Festival in River Falls at Tattersall Distilling, which is now sponsoring an Ultimate Fly-Fishing Giveaway Promotion. This event runs through May 3 and offers an opportunity to win \$2,600 in fly-fishing gear from St. Croix Rods, Orvis, Simms, Yeti, Hatch, Fullingmill, Scientific Anglers and Riversmith. No purchase is necessary. Tattersall is generously donating 4 percent of the proceeds from the sale of its Tightline Organic Vodka to our chapter. Former chapter president Greg Dietl, who won the Tattersall gift box on our recent on-line auction, confirms that Tightline Vodka is top-shelf. To enter go to www.tattersalldistilling.com/tightline/#entertowin.

Artist, guide and author Bob White was our featured speaker at our March meeting. He presented "Beauty and the Beast - Fly Fishing for Trout and Golden Dorado in Argentina." Bob's presentation encompassed his recollections from 40 years of trout fishing in Patagonia and contrasted it with his first experience fishing for Golden Dorado in the Parana Watershed of Northern Argentina. The meeting was well attended with our largest attendance

of the season. Bob graciously donated a print to the chapter, which generated \$450. Also present in March was member Bob Trevis, who recently published a book entitled "Trout Fishing the Driftless Area: A Troutchaser's Guide to Minnesota, Wisconsin & Iowa Trout Streams."

Kiap-TU-Wish is sponsoring TIC in three classrooms this school year: Ellsworth Elementary, Prescott Intermediate School and River Falls Public Montessori Elementary.

Kiap-TU-Wish TIC participants are looking forward to releasing their brown trout fry into the Willow and Trimbelle rivers in late May. Students at River Falls Public Montessori have been collecting caddis and mayfly larvae to feed the voracious appetites of their "class pets." They also enjoyed a virtual field trip to the Northern Aquaculture Demonstration Facility in Bayfield with field scientist Emma Hauser. We also hope to get Aquatic Entomologist Dean Hansen to present his "Bugs in the Classroom" presentation again this year.

We have held at least one brushing workday each week. Our efforts have been focused primarily on a

stretch of the upper Kinni where banks were choked with box elder, buckthorn and honeysuckle. We also held a workday for two classes of FFA Students from Ellsworth High School who turned out to help burn the cut brush on a stretch of the Trimbelle River just downstream of the Gaslite Bar on State Highway 10.

It has been a difficult year for workdays with the unseasonably warm temperatures and lack of snow elevating the fire danger. Randy Arnold has been bringing a pump to every workday and extinguishing the fires before leaving. We have close to 200 bluebird nest boxes that Randy located on some of our restoration sites. These get opened up each fall to prevent mice from moving in over the winter. Volunteers from the chapter have already begun the task of closing them up for the arrival of the returning bluebirds and tree swallows this spring. We had a workday in March with boy scouts from the Ellsworth area. We also continue removing brush on the Trimbelle River.

—Gary Horvath

Lakeshore Chapter

Greetings from Lakeshore TU. We celebrated a successful 2023 at our Year End Bash in December. About 45 members and guests attended to enjoy great food, a very interesting presentation by DNR Water Resources Biologist Craig Helker, a few auction items and recognition of individuals in our chapter who made big contributions.

We presented Lifetime Achievement Awards to Larry Doebert and Wayne Trupke. We presented Myk Hranicka our award for Distinguished Service - Cold Water Conservation. Finally, we presented Wendy Lutzke with our award for Distinguished Service - Youth education for her leadership, commit-

ment and hard work driving the development of our youth programming and first ever STREAM Girls camp.

Our Distinguished Service - Workday Warrior award went to Dave Kempka for his commitment and hard work at every workday in 2023.

These awards were well deserved, but so is recognition for all of the many volunteers that are the lifeblood of our chapter. Last year 87 members donated a total of 800 hours, and we owe a huge thanks to all of you.

January started with one of the only snow storms of the year causing us to cancel our January workday.



LAKESHORE CHAPTER EARNS MAJOR DNR AWARD

Justine Hasz presents its Adopt-a-fishery award to the Lakeshore Chapter members.

We made up for it in February with 17 people turning out to work on brushing and trail improvement along the Onion River. Our February meeting featured two special guests. DNR Fisheries Director Justine Hasz presented us with the 2023 DNR Adopt-a-fisheries Area Organization of the Year for our stewardship of the property.

Following her presentation Art Hirsch from the Michigan Microplastics Coalition offered a zoom

presentation on microplastics in the Great Lakes.

Our March workday saw a dozen volunteers working on the Onion River Fishery. We continued trail maintenance, brushing and bank reinforcement work. We are looking forward to new sign kiosks going up at four of the most popular public parking areas along the Onion.

—Al Wortz

Marinette County Chapter

We had a busy winter with educational presentations at our monthly meetings. And we also put on our annual trout fishing program and had 14 people attend. The first night of the program cov-

ered trout habitat and the needs of trout. The second night was all about fly-fishing gear and how to set up a casting system. The third night covered fly tying, and everyone learned how to tie a wooly bug-



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ger. The fourth and final night was fly casting in the Marinette City Rec. Center.

In March nine of our members offered a casting presentation and lessons at the Fishing, Boating and

Outdoors show in Marinette. April 22 is our annual fundraiser at Embers 1871 in Peshtigo. To donate or purchase tickets contact Dale Lange at 715-582-1135.

—Dale Lange

Oconto River Watershed Chapter

In January four chapter members presented fly tying to the Lifetime Sports Class taught by Jill Halla. Approximately 25 students took part as Wayne Cypinski, Dale Halla, Lyman Wocking, and Dean Simon showed them how to tie some basic flies. These students had already learned fly casting in the fall. Several students tried their hand and created some pretty nice blue gill spiders, pellet flies and streamers. These students will soon visit Lyman's Pond to put all they have learned into practice.

Our conservation fundraiser banquet and drawing is Thursday, April 25 at Romy's Holiday Inn Supper Club at Kelly Lake. The evening begins with a cocktail social at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Raffles prizes include fishing and hunting equipment, cabin/patio accessories, outdoor gear, cash and household items.

Funds raised at banquet will go to support stream projects in Oconto County and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, our TIC programs, the NOCTA Lakewood trout-rearing station, trout stocking in the Oconto River and college scholarships.

Dan Sumnicht has stepped down as banquet chairperson after more than a decade, and will assist new Banquet Chairman Gary Lemmen this year. Tom Klatt, Dale Halla and all board members will collaborate with Gary to make the banquet a successful event.

Members and businesses are encouraged to donate bucket prizes

and Fishing Hole packages. Please contact Gary at 920-604-3105 if you'd like to participate.

We continue to support DNR LTE brushing crews. A few of the streams that the Lakewood crew brushed last year include the Waupee, 2nd S. Br. Oconto, Middle Inlet, North Branch Peme Bon Won, Wausaukee and North Branch Beaver just to name a few. With continued assistance we will continue to target streams that will benefit from fishability brushing.

We are accepting applications for the Don Wagner Memorial Scholarship program. The \$1,000 college scholarship is available to a student who has completed his or her first year of college and has attained sophomore status and who is enrolled in a course associated with environmental sciences or aquaculture, including, but not limited to, an emphasis in fisheries. Special consideration will be given to juniors or seniors.

Also, candidates from the Shawano and Oconto County area will be given priority. Also, special attention will be given to those that have worked in the field. The scholarship will typically be awarded at UW-SP through the financial aids office but could be awarded at any other accredited college of environmental studies.

Send an application of an educational resume for consideration to Oconto River Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 252, Gillett, WI 54124 by May 1, 2024.

—Tom Klatt

Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter

We closed out 2023 with our annual Holiday Party, where we honored our past Veterans Services Representative Matthew Cade for his work with our veterans.

We started the party with a special bucket raffle for workday volunteers which featured an Orvis fly rod and reel combo and other prizes. Volunteers received tickets based on workdays attended. Additional prizes included vintage fiberglass fly rods, modern rods, stocked fly boxes, reels and copies of "Trout Fishing in Southwest Wisconsin" by John Van Vliet, who spoke to our chapter in November.

We also had a food drive with a bucket raffle where members received a raffle ticket for each item of food donated. Prizes included an Echo fly rod and reel combo, fishing gear and copies of the Van Vliet book. This popular raffle produced more than 126 pounds of donated food items, some cash donations and some happy winners.

The last event of the evening was a gift exchange where members who gave a gift, got a gift. I now have some snazzy new socks.

Our January meeting featured two speakers. Leading off was Aar-

on Schiller, DNR fish biologist for Lake Michigan, who spoke about the steelhead and brook trout programs underway and stocking methodologies.

Past president and resident fishing pharmacist Andy Avgoulas gave a great updated presentation on steelhead fishing. His drone photography of some of our local rivers was especially informative.

In February guide PJ Smith gave the chapter a fun and informative program with some down-home fishing philosophy and some practical tips on gear and travel. He stressed how important it was to have fun and enjoy the moment and how important it is to stock up on pink squirrels. Upcoming programs will feature speakers about flyfishing Chile and Belize.

We hosted fly-tying booth at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Sport Show in March.

We have a full slate of workdays focusing on local waters and our volunteers are rested, ready and waiting for action. Meanwhile, some of us are getting out and enjoying some early season trout fishing.

—Rick Larkin

Southern Wisconsin Chapter

We invite you to our 3rd annual Spring Fair Fundraiser on Saturday,

April 20, from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. It will again be held at the East Side Club

on Lake Monona in Madison. You'll enjoy delectable street food from the 608 Community Kitchen, try your hand in the casting contest, peruse the silent auctions and cross your fingers for a stunning array of bucket raffle items. Please visit <https://swtu.org/springfundraiser> to learn more and get your tickets.

The event helps fund activities throughout the year, including a DNR intern to help complete stream surveys, native grass seeds for wetland and stream bank restoration, improved water monitoring tools and supporting the great work of TU and many other great partner organizations.

You are also invited to join our

Wild Rivers Chapter

We are off to a fast start this year. We donated \$5,000 to Great Lakes TU and \$4,500 to the DNR to help support a two-year creel survey on the White River in Bayfield and Ashland County. Chapter members are conducting an extensive fly-tying program for students at Ashland High School and a TIC program at Hurley High School.

When you are the stewards for more than 2,126 miles of coldwater trout streams and cover seven north-west Wisconsin counties (7,461 sq. miles) you have a lot of members across the large area. So, this year we are holding our Annual WRTU Conservation Expo & Fundraising in Hayward on April 6, at Flat Creek Lodge in Hayward.

We are excited about all the conservation organizations (15 in total) that will be exhibiting and educating attendees at our Expo. Of course, we will also have lots of fishing equipment to raffle and auction off, both new and used.

We held a "Fly Tying Rally" in March at the Sawmill Saloon in Seeley.

On June 1, we are once again partnering with U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the 24th Annual Kids Fishing Day at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center. Kids learn about the aquatic life, the fish, tie a fly and then get to fish with it on the ponds behind the visitor center.

Wisconsin River Valley Chapter

In December we met at Sconni's Alehouse and Eatery to watch Dallas Moe's presentation "Spin Fishing for Trout – More Than Child's Play." He gave a lot of information on lure selection, color and weight and where to cast in the stream to not spook fish.

January featured an evening with Lucas Koenig and Taylor Curran of the DNR. Taylor shared some news with us on the 2015-2016 Prairie River Project. Eight years after the project began, the fish shocking survey results showed a 156 percent increase in brook trout four inches and larger, a 326 percent increase of brook trout 8 inches or larger, a 565 percent increase in brown trout 4 inches and larger and a 1,518 percent increase of brown trout 16 inches or larger.

Colder water and increased flows have resulted in healthier fish populations.

February featured the International Fly Fishing Film Festival. We raised more than \$11,000. Many thanks to all that attended.

Many thanks to our wonderful

spring stream workdays. Jim Hess has once again assembled a terrific series of streamside events from April to June. We'll return to some sites to continue work done in prior years and also start work on some newer easements that we're very excited about. Some days will be about removing invasive trees and others will be spent planting. We're excited to again be partnering with the DNR, Nohr Chapter and others to make a real difference for our cold water resource. Details are shared on swtu.org and these are all on Saturdays, starting about 9 a.m. and done by noon ... plenty of time to then grab a rod and drift a fly.

—Drew Kasel

We conduct several other kids fly-tying and casting events during the year with the DNR and USFS. Along with this we work with the DNR on tree planting and loads of buckthorn removal again on our local rivers. Late this year into 2025 we will be assisting the USFS with removal of two spring pond dams and helping restore the riparian zones. Dates to be determined.

Lastly, we are creating a new veteran's program with the help Jeff Butler. We plan to offer fishing in a drift boat down the fabled Namekagon River and offering veterans the chance to help us with some of our stream projects. Veterans also enjoy contributing to the community while helping improve the health of our trout streams. Sometimes there are greater rewards accomplishing tasks together while swatting pesky mosquitoes, sweating, and sharing a cold beer.

As the new chapter president I would love to see a weekend gathering of chapter presidents to network and share ideas. Over my long career I have always found networking with peers to be an invaluable resource for new and fresh ideas. I suggest a summer weekend in the Hayward area might be a great gathering place. Maybe we could include the DNR.

—John Simonson

sponsors including Wisconsin Public Service, Bull Falls Harley Davidson, WAOW TV 9, WPR, Creative Planning, Chase Outdoors, The Silent Glide Canoe and Kayak Shop, Fall Line Outfitters, Griesbach Auto Service, Dan Hanson's Prairie River Cabin, Sawmill Brewing Company, Great Dane Pub & Brewing Zastrow the Beer Man, Timekeepers Distillery, Luke Statz and Fly or Die Outdoors, Sportsman's Repair Shop, Mel's Trading Post, Great Northern Distilling, Weinbrenner Shoe Co., Janke Bookstore and County Market.

We are already beginning to spend the money raised at the Film Festival. We have two teens interested in attending the Council's Youth Fishing Camp and we are anxious to put this money to work improving more habitat.

We have been meeting for Hackle and Hops on the third Tuesday of the month at Sawmill Brewing in Merrill.

In March TU Great Lakes Stream Restoration Manager Chris Collier presented "Building

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Bridges: How TU's Great Lakes Program Uses Infrastructure to Connect People and Trout."

On April 9, Fall Line Outfitter's Craig Cook will present "The Fly Shop Report." He will talk about new gear for the season. This will be at Sconni's Alehouse and Eatery in Wausau.

May 14 is "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," a presentation by Bob Payne. Bob has been teaching fly-tying classes for many years. Please join us for his presentation.

Wolf River Chapter

The early trout season on the Wolf River has provided some thrills for many a trout angler this warm winter. Some good trout have

May 17 is the Taylor County Youth Expo at the Taylor County Fairgrounds. Last year more than 400 kids came to this event. We have a fly-tying area and a casting area. This event starts around 8:30 a.m. Lunch is provided. If you are able to help, please email Linda Lehman at buglehman@yahoo.com.

Please check emails for any additional events or activities that may pop up. Have a great summer.

—Linda Lehman

been caught and released. Low water levels have made wading easier than usual. We hope the weather pattern changes and the rains come

before we're dealing with a drought.

Thank you to those who wrote letters of opposition to Langlade County and the DNR concerning the opening of the Wolf River State Trail north of Highway 64 to Lily to ATV/UTV traffic. We will continue to follow this issue and update you when more information is available. This may be an ongoing battle for a while. The ATV/UTV groups are very persistent. Currently this trail is open to cyclists, hikers and horses. If the current rules are followed, handicapped ATV/UTV riders may also use the trail to hunt or fish on public lands, but not recreational trail riding.

We began our work days in March, a bit earlier than usual. John Carbonari, Dick and Diane Pence, Nathan Schmidt, Doug Moldenhau-

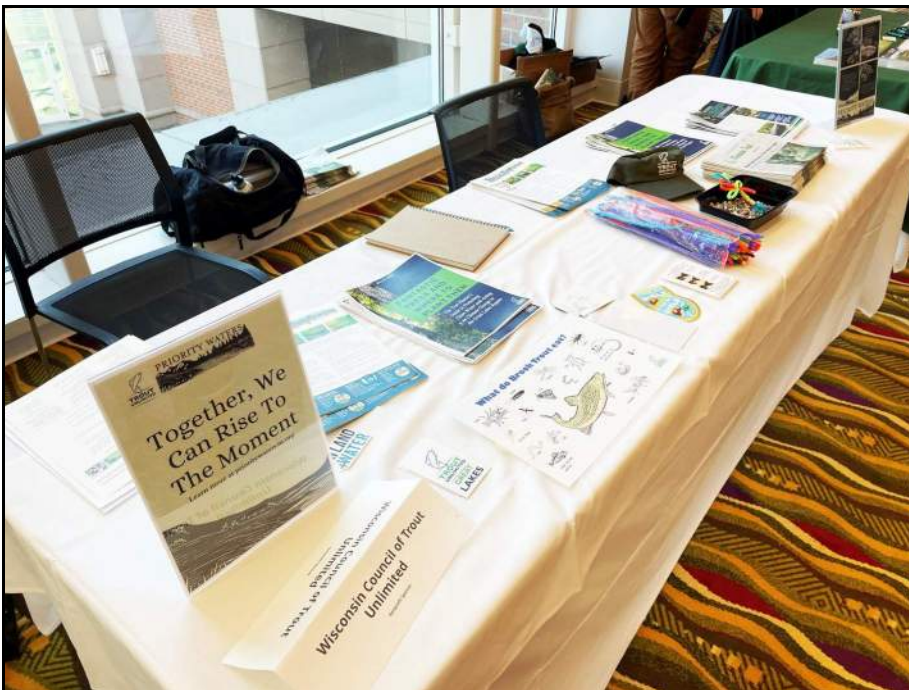
er and friend Rodney cleared a trail near Ninemile Creek to improve access for fishing, creek brushing and possibly tree planting in the future. There is still more work to be done on this trail.

Our spring meeting and elections are April 13 at Wolf River Roots. All officer positions are up for election, along with three-year board positions #2 and #4. Please contact Zach Buchanan at zbuck50@gmail.com if you are interested in running for office.

We will also discuss future work day projects and fundraising ideas, and removal of the remnants of a former logging dam below Lily on the Wolf River. The removal of this obstruction will need permitting and funds.

—Laurie Zen Netzow

Wisconsin Land & Water Conference



By Scott Allen, TU Great Lakes Stream Restoration Specialist

Working in the environmental conservation field can be discouraging sometimes, but if you're looking for reasons to be optimistic about the future, I recommend attending the Wisconsin Land & Water annual conference and talking with any of the hundreds of attendees who are passionate about conservation. The most recent conference last month in Green Bay was actually sold out.

Trout Unlimited, via the Wisconsin State Council, Oak Brook Chapter and its Great Lakes program, was a non-profit sponsor of the conference.

The conference was led by the non-profit, membership organization that supports the staff of land and water conservation departments in all of Wisconsin's 72 counties. You may know, or even have worked with, the county conservation staff in your area.

If you haven't, reach out to them the next time you have a conservation issue. They can actively assist efforts on things like stream restoration, ensuring farmers in your watershed have nutrient management plans, inspecting potential water-quality violations and securing grants.

The conference included numerous sessions, with presentations on a wide variety of conservation topics. Most topics focused on agricultural issues, which we all know are critical to the health of our trout streams, due to watershed land use and runoff water quality from ag fields. It was educational to hear about these issues from the point of view of farmers and county conservation staff.

Other presentations highlighted efforts at stream monitoring, hydrologic restoration, conservation policy and climate resiliency.

Governor Evers described the government's efforts at conservation, best-selling author Dan Egan spoke about phosphorous and invasive species impacts to the Great Lakes and several of TU's partners discussed their ongoing conservation work.

TU's sponsorship gave us the opportunity to host a table in the exhibition hall, allowing me to advertise our mission and to network with existing and future partners.

Kudos to everyone involved in helping TU support the conference. I thought it was a very worthwhile few days and TU should feel proud to have sponsored it. I plan to do it again next year, and I hope you can join me.

Coulee Region Chapter thanks business community for support

Community support is very important to help raise funds for the work that we accomplish. CRTU would like to thank these local businesses, which donated to its 2024 banquet. If you shop these retailers, please thank them, and show your support with your purchases.

Buzzy's Inc. – Viroqua, Wis.
 Cedar Creek Country Club – Onalaska, Wis.
 Chicagoland KOA Holiday – Union, Ill.
 Coulee Creations – La Crescent, Minn.
 Deep Rooted Organics – Westby, Wis.
 Drawings Daryl (Skrupky) – Viroqua, Wis.
 Driftless Angler - Viroqua, Wis.
 Driftless Café – Viroqua, Wis.
 Driftless Nets, Inc. – La Farge, Wis.
 Driftless Provisions – Viroqua, Wis.
 Fancy Pants Winery – DeSoto, Wis.
 Fine Lines Beauty and Boutique – Westby, Wis.
 Hotel Fortney – Viroqua, Wis.
 Island Outdoors – La Crosse, Wis.
 Kickapoo Valley Reserve - La Farge, Wis.
 Latarnia Guest House – Eastman, Wis.
 Noble Rind Artisanal Cheeses – Viroqua, Wis.
 Outdoor News – Plymouth, Minn.
 ProLine Printing and Signs – Viroqua, Wis.
 Pure Concepts Hair Boutique – Viroqua, Wis.
 Second Nature at Reads Creek – Readstown, Wis.
 Uniting Ethos – La Farge, Wis.
 Vernon Vineyards – Viroqua, Wis.
 Viroqua Co+op – Viroqua, Wis.
 WonderState Coffee – Viroqua, Wis.

Spring Tree Planting with Friends of the North Pikes Creek Wetlands

Please join us this spring up in the Bayfield Peninsula for a whole weekend of tree planting fun at Beaver Hollow, May 10-12.

This is an annual planting event put on by the Friends of the North Pikes Creek Wetlands (FNPCW), a grassroots conservation and community organization who since 2012 has acquired a combined 410 acres of sensitive North Pikes Creek headwaters and protected them in perpetuity. In 2019, the Friends utilized a small upland portion of their property to build Beaver Hollow, a universally accessible outdoor education venue for community use.

This year, FNPCW is partnering with TU National, Wild Rivers Chapter, Superior Rivers Watershed

Association and more organizations to make this event even bigger and better! We will be planting over 1000 trees including Princeton elm, swamp white oak, bur oak and more.

TU is able to support this event through a Water Stewardship Grant from Bells Brewery.

Be sure to check out the Friends of the North Pikes Creek Wetlands website and sign up for the event at northpikescreek.org. Come ready to plant trees, learn and engage with conservation-minded community members. All necessary tools, training and lunch will be provided. Please dress for the weather and bring work or gardening gloves. We look forward to seeing you in May!

APACHE, from page 17

I headed upstream, searching for a gap in the vegetation and a little shelter from the wind.

Hiking along the stream wasn't too difficult, but the elevation was above 7,500 feet, so I was huffing and puffing as I went. After a quarter mile or so, I came to a gap in the willows near a steep rock outcrop that partially blocked the wind. The stream, though small, had rock-strewn riffles, runs and pools and lots of woody cover and looked very fishy.

I tied on a #14 Adams dry and cast to the head of a pool, confidently expecting to see a trout come up to grab the fly. But nothing happened. I fished the stretch thoroughly and carefully, trying to avoid scaring the fish in the clear water, but I had no response. I switched to a small beadhead nymph. Again, no reaction. I was puzzled. I walked through one of the pools trying to spook some trout, but I saw no movement. This was discouraging.

I headed upstream looking for more stretches suitable for fly casting, and they became more common as I moved up the stream valley. But despite great habitat, I had no action. I never saw a rise or a fish scurrying away. I tried all sorts of flies, and I occasionally even made a great cast, but nothing was doing. At one point, another angler leap-frogged past me, and he too had not seen a fish. Maybe the population had crashed since the video had been made.

Feeling the pressure

After a couple of hours of fruitless casting, I sat on a streamside log to gather my thoughts. I was starting to feel the pressure. I only had one day to fish, and this stream was supposedly my best bet. If the population had crashed, I was out of luck. But maybe in the low clear water, the fish were ultra-spooky. I decided to fish several pools as quietly and carefully as I possibly could to see what would happen.

I moved back downstream to a particularly nice pool that had a low cutbank on one side. I crouched low and stopped about 15 feet from the edge of the bank out of sight of the stream (Figure 3). I made a blind cast that draped over the side of the bank into the water with a small

nymph. It was hard to see my line, but had that been a little twitch? I cast again, and this time when the twitch came, I struck. To my delight and amazement, I felt a tug, and I soon had a six-inch Apache trout in my hand. I was ecstatic. The fish was gorgeous, silvery with a sprinkling of small spots randomly scattered along the tail, back and flanks.

I moved back down the stream, focusing on similar pools with cutbanks on one side such that I could sneak up and cast over them without seeing the water or the fish seeing me. Situations like this were limited, and not every one of them produced. But I managed to hook three more fish and land one, an eight-incher. I was happy.

After an hour of stealth fishing, I had run out of new water to cover without a long hike back upstream, so I decided to try another spot.

Trying Fish Creek

A friend in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had recommended the Fish Creek system, about 40 miles to the southeast, where he'd had good fishing years before. This system eventually flows into the Black River, which joins with the White River coming out of the reservation to form the Salt River, which passes through metropolitan Phoenix and empties into the Gila River. The Gila River flows southwestward across Arizona to join the Colorado River at Yuma near the Mexican border. So, although relatively close as the crow flies, an Apache trout trying to swim from the West Fork to Fish Creek would have to traverse hundreds of miles of unsuitable river habitat.

The drive to the Fish Creek area was beautiful, passing through high mountain forests and meadows. The aspens were changing color and were bright yellow and gold, and there were many spectacular vistas. But everywhere there was evidence of recent forest fires, an ominous portent for the future.

When I got to the Fish Creek area, I turned on to a very marginal forest service road. As I slowly bounced my way along, it became clear that getting to the larger streams in the system would involve a long steep hike down into the valley, and I didn't have the time (or energy) for that. The best I could do was drive to a tributary, Corduroy

**APACHE TROUT FROM THE WEST FORK LITTLE COLORADO RIVER**

Creek, a small headwater stream. When I reached the creek, it became clear that "small" on the map meant "tiny" in reality. In most places the stream was a foot or two wide with little flow and just a few inches of water and no habitat large enough to hold fish. But as I moved along the creek, I came to a culvert road crossing. Immediately downstream, a small pool had been scoured out, and it was full of small trout.

I ran back to the car and grabbed my rod and then crept back to the culvert. I dapped a small nymph in the pool. Several trout rushed up to the fly, but turned away at the last second, and none took. This happened a couple of more times and then the fish lost interest. I switched to a smaller nymph and a lighter tippet, and on the first cast, one of the smallest trout grabbed it. I derricked it out of the water and into my hand. But what was this? It looked different than the Apache Trout I'd caught in the West Fork (Figure 8). The spots were a bit larger and concentrated on the back rather than spread across the flanks. There was a hint of red on

the sides. I realized I had caught a hybrid Apache-rainbow trout. Something had changed in the Fish Creek systems since my friend had last fished it.

I tried the culvert pool for a few more minutes, but in catching my trout I'd agitated those that remained, and they dashed around wildly and showed no interest in my fly. It was getting late, and I was tired, so I packed up and made the two-hour drive back to Eager for the night. Once I had a cell signal again, I checked online and found that Fish Creek had been one of the victims of the Wallow Fire. The barrier had failed after the fire, rainbows had invaded, and now 12 years later, none of the Apache trout in the system were pure. More than 20 miles of stream had been compromised. It was a discouraging end to what had been a great day, and it highlighted just how vulnerable the Apache trout remained. But my mood soon lifted. My brief Arizona fishing trip had been a success, and I had seen firsthand how more than 50 years of work by countless people had preserved a beautiful piece of Arizona's biological heritage.

Mining update: Quiet for now

By Johnson Bridgwater,
Water Advocates Organizer,
River Alliance of Wisconsin

Continuing the good news shared in the last update, Wisconsin continues to be quiet on all mining fronts. The proposed Back 40 mine on the Menominee River in eastern Wisconsin has had zero activity related to its necessary permitting processes, and Gold Resources Corp., the company that is currently seeking to open the mine on the Michigan side of the river, is facing a five-year low on its stock value. Given this fact, it is unlikely that anything significant will happen any time soon.

There is similarly good news for north central Wisconsin. Greenlight Metals, a privately held Canadian company, failed to make any progress on its gold-mining pursuits in either Marathon County (Reef Deposit) or Taylor County (Bend Deposit). Towards the end of last year, it was facing serious financial issues, and it has now lost its winter drilling window for the Bend Deposit, so we expect things to remain quiet for a while. We are closely following their interest in new leases in Jackson County, Wisconsin, but at this time no progress has taken place.

Michigan and Minnesota

We are paying close attention to mining interests in both Minnesota and Michigan due to their potential impacts to Lake Superior and our neighbors' trout waters. While nothing is imminent, we are closely watching developments in Tamarack, Minnesota as well as the central Upper Peninsula region as a company called Talon Metals seeks to open a mine in Tamarack and claims they will start exploratory drilling in the UP this summer.

There is one proposed metallic sulfide mine that we are following closely due to recent developments, and we would ask anybody in northern Wisconsin to pay attention to this project—the proposed Copperwood Mine, located upslope from Lake Superior and adjacent to both the North Country Trail as well as Porcupine Mountains State Park, is just across the Wisconsin border in Gogebic County, Michigan. For full details about this situation visit www.protecttheporkies.com.

While things are reasonably quiet, consider spending an hour watching "The Myth of Clean Mining," presented by Friends of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. You will find this video on YouTube, and it is a great primer on why metallic sulfide mining in water-rich areas always leads to water pollution. It includes a discussion of the Flambeau Mine in Wisconsin.

You can also visit River Alliance of Wisconsin's Mining Page for online resources dedicated to mining education, and you can sign up there for our "Mining Updates" emails. Simply visit: <https://wisconsinrivers.org/mining/>

Pelican River Forest

I would like to call attention to a recently completed conservation easement known as the Pelican River Forest. It is approximately 70,000 acres of land and water in Oneida, Forest and Langlade counties, which includes some known mineral deposits. It is now under protection from mining thanks to this easement, the largest ever secured in Wisconsin. For more information visit www.pelicanriver.org/

**CULVERT POOL ON CORDUROY CREEK**

Mending the mind

Time on a stream puts life's struggles into perspective.

By Tom Meyer

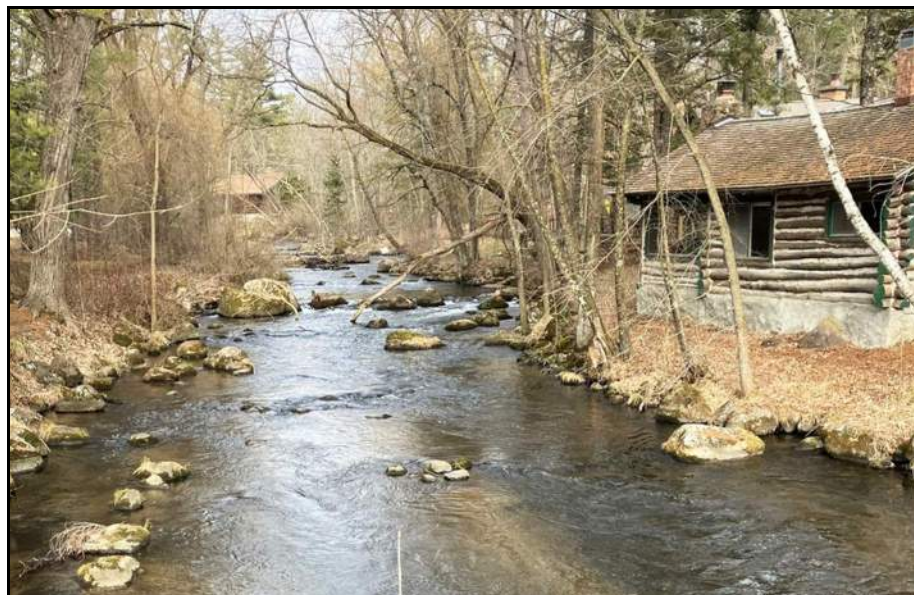
One cold evening in February a group of six of my fishing friends met at my house near Wild Rose to make plans for the upcoming season's fishing trips. Four of us are going to New Brunswick to fish the Restigouche River for Atlantic salmon in July. We also were planning our annual trip to the Escanaba River in June. We needed to book flights and rental cars, reserve hotel rooms, and also talk about and tie flies for the trips. Jeff Treu got out his fly-tying gear and got busy at my dining room table demonstrating some classic Atlantic salmon patterns, namely the Rusty Rat and the Picasse. We discussed some proven reliable flies for the Escanaba. The Thin Mint streamer and various dry or emerger mayfly patterns usually work in early June. We also had plans to watch the new fly-fishing movie "Mending the Line" on Amazon Prime.

After getting a handle on our plans, we sampled some fine bourbon I brought back from the Spokane CX3 last October and a couple favorite craft beers that Wayne Parmley and Joe Peikert brought to share. After enjoying Mike Salas's famous nachos and dip and my wife

Karen's chili, followed by chocolate chip bars from Karen Giese, I started the movie. I don't want to be a spoiler but I don't think it's going to be the new blockbuster fly fishing movie like "A River Runs Through It." That film took fly fishing from an elite specialized passion for a few, into a new trendy lifestyle for many. It brought new people into the sport and the fly shops loved it.

"Mending the Line" is about a group of U.S. Marines with PTSD and the struggles they have after returning from war. The film, while sad and tragic, brings the very real problem to the forefront that many soldiers are experiencing. Not surprisingly, fly fishing is featured as an effective therapy. It was uplifting at the end of the film knowing that the sport of fly fishing is not only just plain fun but also has a healing effect for many. I think anyone who fishes and has a stressful job, or anyone who has lost a loved one, was given a scary diagnosis or experienced any kind of tragedy can relate to how rivers and fly fishing can be therapeutic.

I am retired now but I had a very stressful job as a Police Officer and Detective in Milwaukee's inner city for nearly 30 years. I always felt that I had a stable mindset and the right



HEALING WATERS

For 50 years the author has relaxed and enjoyed the benefits that rivers and fly fishing offer at this quaint cabin on a beautiful trout stream.

attitude. Most of the time I was able to leave the violence, hostility and tragedies at work and not take it home with me, but not always.

I did not serve in the Military and am not trying to compare the stress from my job with that of soldiers who have PTSD. My only point is that fly fishing can be beneficial to many and anyone reading this probably already knows that. I was fortunate to have a family cabin to go to in Waushara County and, of course, trout fishing. It was my outlet to relieve stress.

The trout stream was and still is my happy place. The stress and problems seem to go away at least while I am focused on fishing. Of course, they don't go away, but at least after spending time on a trout stream I feel renewed and more ready to tackle the struggles that life brings. Even the sounds and smells along a trout stream have a positive and pleasing affect. The sound of water trickling over rocks, the pounding of hooves as a deer runs away and stops to snort. The squawking of birds, squirrels and other small creatures that object to you intruding in their habitat. I enjoy the smell of pine trees and ferns along the river and that sweet smell of trout on your hands after releasing a fish.

There are some notable lines in the movie by one of the lead actors Brian Cox. "Standing in the river you become part of it. A small piece

of the grandness that surrounds us." That reminds me of the famous quote by an unknown author that says "Trout don't live in ugly places" or something like that. The term "healing waters" is a real thing. Even when the fishing isn't great, just being out in nature and spending time with good friends makes it all worth it.

My friends know that John Gierach is my favorite author, and I quote him often. Perhaps no-one has ever said it better than Gierach in these two quotes:

"They say you forget your troubles on a trout stream, but that's not quite it. What happens is that you begin to see where your troubles fit into the grand scheme of things, and suddenly they're just not such a big deal anymore."

"The solution to any problem, work, love, money, whatever, is to go fishing, and the worse the problem, the longer the trip should be."

Tom Meyer is a member of the Central Wisconsin Chapter.



TOM MEYER (LEFT) AND HIS BROTHER TIM AT FAMILY CABIN, CIRCA 1962



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TU's Priority Waters Initiative:

Where are we at and what's been done?

By Chris Collier, Sara Strassman, Peter Jonas and Tom Lager

It's been almost three years since the Priority Waters Initiative was announced to TU members and volunteers, and a lot has happened in that time. Across the country, teams of TU members, staff and volunteers worked to identify areas where increased or renewed collaboration could rise to the moment to make even more gains for coldwater and trout conservation. We then worked with regional and federal partners to refine and select these priority waters for coldwater conservation.

In Wisconsin, we had participation from volunteers covering all corners of the state and from partners including the DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and Wisconsin Wetlands Association. I am incredibly proud of the work this team did and am honored to have been part of this planning process. I'm also especially thankful for the chapter and state council leadership who helped review our final proposals, providing key insights that made our Priority Water plans that much stronger.

Our team selected four priority waters (Central Sands, Driftless, Green Bay Headwaters and Northwest Wisconsin's Wild Rivers). We also noted that this left several iconic and important rivers out of the process, and while we cannot prioritize everything, we did want to give these waters the recognition they deserve, so we created a second designation--Home Waters. These are waters that are important for trout

and recreation and could be improved through careful collaboration and investments. However, they were determined to need more time spent on partnership building and project development before being brought up to priority waters designation. These Home Waters include Spring Ponds, the Upper Wolf River, Upper Wisconsin River, Upper Namekagon River and Lake Superior Tributaries.

All the information above has been presented through Wisconsin Trout and various State Council and chapter meetings in the past two years. A Priority Waters website has been launched and I would encourage everyone to check it out at prioritywaters.tu.org.

Here are some updates on our Priority Waters.

Central Sands

For several years the TU CARES team has been engaging partners for a large dam removal, crossing replacement and habitat restoration project on the West Branch White River. The project is the 13th Avenue dam removal, and the project will benefit more than 25 miles of coldwater habitat. It has been a massive and expensive undertaking with both technical difficulties and fundraising needs threatening project feasibility. Now, due to the perseverance of the TU CARES team, and funding support from the DNR, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Town of Wautoma, and TU chapter contributions, the finish line is in sight.

One final piece of funding puzzle,



Tom Lager

STREAM ASSESSMENT ON THE WEST BRANCH WHITE RIVER

DNR staff completing a stream assessment near the to-be-removed dam and new stream crossing site.

zle, a pending Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant, is all that stands between the \$1.8 million project and construction. Thanks to the tireless effort of TU CARES, we are confident that this project will be completed.

The team is also kicking off an effort to prioritize watershed scale restoration in the Central Sands. After an in-depth review and discussion with partners, they determined to focus efforts on creating a watershed plan for the Mekan River. This effort is receiving funding from the NDR Surface Water Grants Program and chapter contributions to create the strategic plan.

The project will involve reviewing data on threats facing the watershed and completing stakeholder engagement to craft a plan to improve coldwater health

and resilience. The product will be a plan designed to build a community effort to protect and restore the watershed by identifying direct actions can be taken to protect and restore the Mekan. Kudos to the TU CARES team for spearheading this planning effort.

Driftless

The 24,000 thousand square-mile Driftless Region Priority Waters area includes portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois. The Wisconsin portion of the driftless is the largest of the four states.

The origins of the Driftless Area Restoration Effort go back 20 years to 2004 when a group of visionary TU volunteers met in Galeana, Illinois to discuss how they could collectively address common



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Scott Allen

BOIS BRULE TRIB GETS NEW LIFE

A new culvert being installed on a tributary to the Bois Brule to improve aquatic organism passage.

watershed problems throughout the Driftless region. TU chapters pooled and sought funding, Jeff Hastings was hired as the first manager and TUDARE was formed.

The brave initiative of those TU leaders resulted in 350 miles of streams being restored during the past 20 years. The environmental impact of that stream restoration is impressive. More than 18,000 pounds of phosphorus a year and 30,000 tons of sediment a year no longer impair our local waters or find their way down to the Mississippi, thanks to TUDARE restoration projects. Trout productivity has increased by up to 10 times in streams with habitat restoration.

The Priority Waters designation is a sign of Trout Unlimited's continued commitment to the important work of restoring Driftless Area streams. Reconnecting streams to their floodplain and installing habitat will continue to be the core of our work. But the way we restore streams evolves to meet the de-

mands of climate change and to take advantage of the opportunities of new funding sources like phosphorous trading credits.

The Driftless Area is managing a new infusion of funds from NRCS for our Regional Conservation Partnership Program. We will continue supporting effective practices that have addressed resource concerns along streams, but we are expanding our techniques to include new practices that can achieve healthy farms and improve habitats.

New challenges and new data have led TUDARE to expand our work into identifying and removing barriers to fish passage under our new TUDARE Program Manager, Sara Strassman. In 2023, we hired seasonal technicians to collect fish passage and flood resiliency data on culverts and bridges. This work will continue in 2024 and this data will be a critical component of our Driftless Conservation Portfolio that will target strategies and restoration approaches for our Priority Waters

across the Driftless Area. This data also provides the necessary information for municipalities to assess and address the flood vulnerability of their infrastructure, helping sustain our rural Driftless Area communities and improve the health of our waterways.

Green Bay headwaters and the Upper Wolf and Upper Wisconsin Home Waters

In the Brule, Oconto, Peshtigo and Menominee Watersheds, TU National's Great Lakes Stream Restoration Program worked with the U.S. Forest Service and local governments to remove and replace four crossings creating fish passage barriers, reconnecting more than 15 miles of coldwater habitat.

Chapters completed volunteer days and engagement activities throughout these watersheds that continue to improve coldwater habitat and bring in more people to help us be champions for coldwater conservation. From tree plantings along rivers like the Prairie to a truly massive rock ford removed by hand along the Hunting River, our members and volunteers continue to show everyone what getting boots on the ground (and in the river) can do to make a meaningful difference.

Lastly, the northeast chapters continued their annual tradition of contributing to programs like TU's Great Lakes Stream Restoration Team, the DNR's habitat crews, and U.S. Forest Service fisheries teams. This year the chapters pledged more than \$46,000 to support these efforts, and I cannot wait to see how these contributions build on the oth-

er activities our chapters have planned.

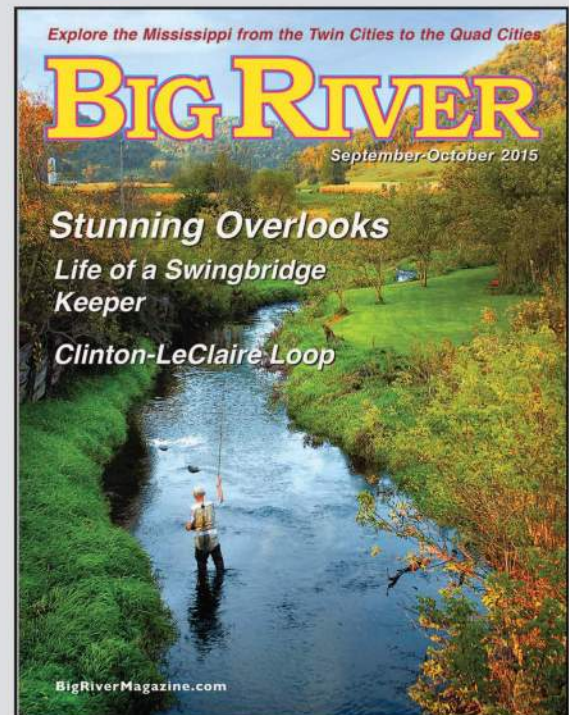
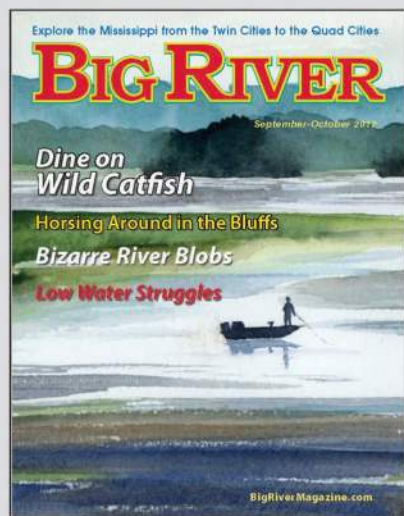
Wild Rivers and the Lake Superior tributaries and Namekagon Home Waters

In a region that includes thriving native and wild trout populations, one of the nation's first scenic rivers, and the mighty Lake Superior, there is no shortage of work to be done. TU Great Lakes staff implemented the first of three crossing replacements on a Bois Brule River class 1 tributary. More importantly, our team is developing a stronger connection with the Wild Rivers Chapter.

Speaking of this partnership, the Namekagon, one of the first scenic rivers in the country, lies outside of the Great Lakes basin but faces many of the same problems our Great Lakes Team works on; barriers that prevent fish from moving from larger rivers into colder tributaries. Wild Rivers members have identified several crossings on the Namekagon and brought them to Great Lakes staff attention. We can then work with the chapter to provide ideas for funding and removing these barriers.

Finally, I want to close these updates with the unicorn of the Great Lakes, the coaster brook trout. Coasters were historically common in Lake Superior but due to over-harvesting, habitat loss and other issues, stocks are significantly lower today. In exciting news, restoration efforts are finding renewed momentum to recover coaster populations, and TU is excited to be part of this work.

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EVERYONE PARTICIPATED IN SELECTING PRIORITY WATERS
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