



Wisconsin Trout

Winter 2024

Watershed Access Fund steps in again

Precious parcel along the Kickapoo River, which connects miles of water, is now open for public access. Supporters of our Watershed Access Fund helped make it happen.

In September the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC) purchased a precious 17-acre property adjacent to the 8,600-acre Kickapoo Valley Reserve (KVR) from a private landowner, with funds provided by the WITU Watershed Access Fund and the Coulee Region Chapter, along with several other partner organizations.

The property will be open to the public and will eventually be transferred to the Kickapoo Reserve Management Board for ownership and ongoing management.

This property in Vernon County was the only remaining private property along an 18-mile stretch of the Kickapoo River and provides important conservation benefits and recreational opportunities.

Hay Valley Road forms part of the northern boundary, and more than 1,800 feet along the Kickapoo River form the western boundary. The rest of the property shares a border with the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

Linking the lands

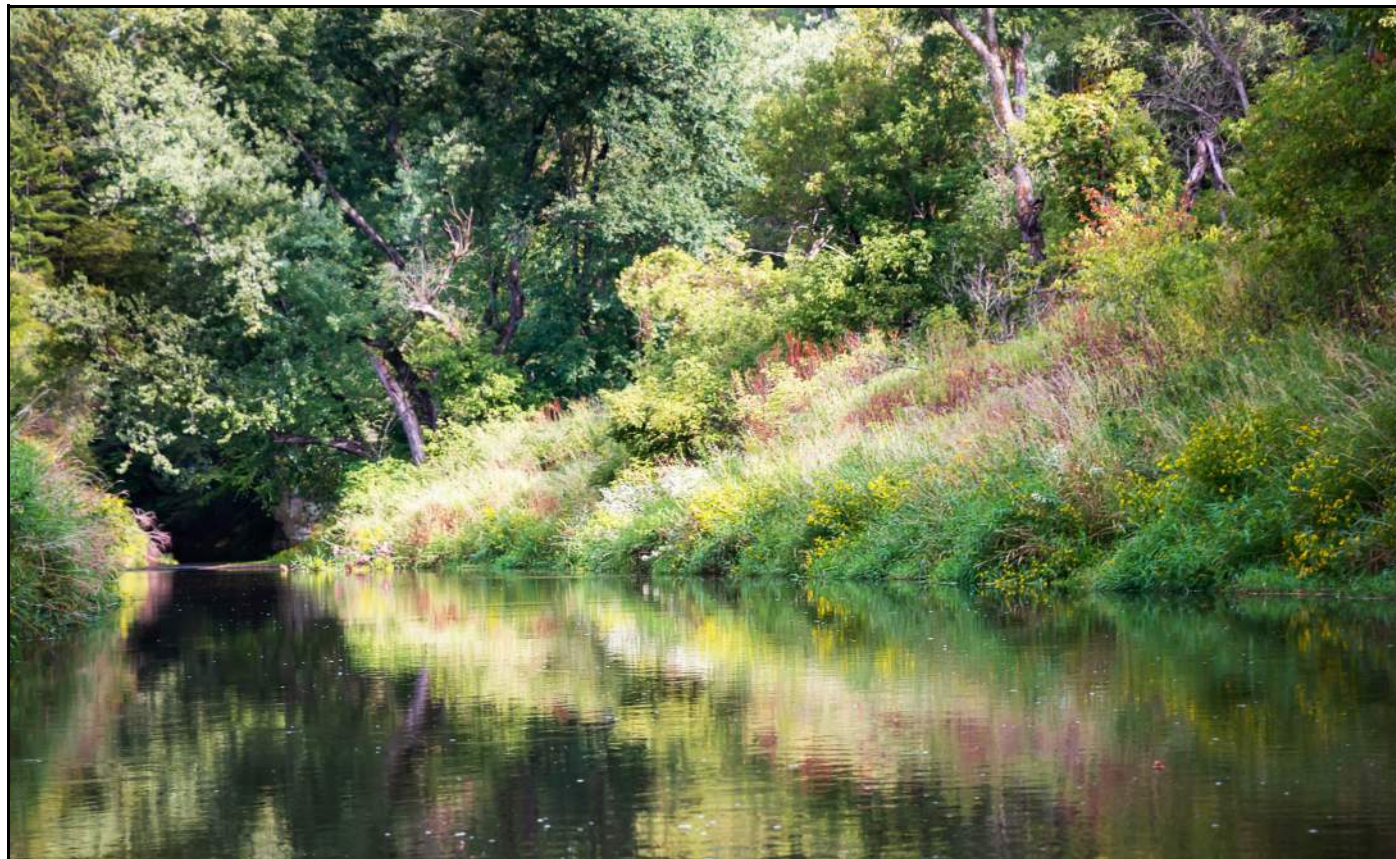
While the property is relatively small, it adds to a contiguous protected corridor of more than 12,000 acres that includes both Wildcat Mountain State Park and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Wildlife corridors are critical for maintaining water quality and biodiversity.

“Protecting the land around Hay Valley Creek will stabilize the stream banks, provide healthy soils that will absorb excess water and nutrients during rain events, and sequester carbon to fight climate change,” said Gretchen Pfeiffer, Mississippi Valley Conservancy board president.

She added, “The water flowing from the protected property to Hay Valley Creek will possess the quality and quantity necessary to support a fully functioning aquatic ecosystem with common and rare fishes, native mussels, critical aquatic insects and native aquatic plants.” Native birds, insects and wildlife will also be able to rely on the protected habitat.

Hay Valley Creek is designated as a Class I trout stream, and the stretch of the Kickapoo River on this property is a Class II Trout stream. When WITU and the local Coulee Region Chapter became aware of this opportunity, they were eager to get involved.

“We love partnerships because land has gotten so expensive that it’s hard to purchase it on our own, so we look to partner with other organizations like the Conservancy,” says Kim McCarthy, a TU volunteer who manages the Watershed Access Fund. This is the seventh property acquisition the Watershed Access Fund has supported since the fund was formed in 2010.



Jon Klocek, Vendi Advertising

POPULAR FISHING AND PADDLING DESTINATION

The land acquired by Mississippi Valley Conservancy along the Kickapoo River is a popular trout fishing and paddling destination in Vernon County, Wisconsin. The Council’s Watershed Access Fund played a part in the acquisition.

The Wisconsin DNR has conducted past surveys on Hay Valley Creek, confirming populations of brook trout and brown trout, brook stickleback, fantail darter, Johnny darter and others.

In summer the creek provides a coldwater refuge from the Kickapoo River. Wetlands on the property support “species of special concern,” including Blanding’s turtle and other wildlife, and the property is within the designated Kickapoo-Wildcat Important Bird Area.

Multiple partners working together

The long-term plan is to permanently protect the natural resources on this property through a conservation easement held by the Conservancy when the property is transferred to the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Board for management and ownership into the future.

The partnership began with a conservation-minded property owner’s willingness to protect a special piece of land and make it available to others. The property owner, who wishes to remain anonymous, shared, “I’m happy to do my small part. It just made sense that my land along the river be used as a preserve. We need more of those areas.”

Funding and support from multiple partners made it possible for the Mississippi Valley Conservancy to purchase this extraordinary property. Major support was provided by Wisconsin TU’s Watershed Access

Fund, the Coulee Region Chapter of TU and the Wisconsin Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, as well as several smaller grants from the Wisconsin Land Fund and the John C.

Bock Foundation, and a gift to the Conservancy from an anonymous donor.

Source: Mississippi Valley Conservancy

We hope to see you all at the Banquet

Council Awards Banquet Feb. 3 in Oshkosh. Come celebrate our award winners.

The annual Council Awards Banquet and fundraiser is Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024 at the Oshkosh Convention Center, 2 N. Main Street, Oshkosh. Doors open at 4:30 p.m.

We have reserved a limited number of rooms at the Hilton Garden Inn (920-966-1300) for Friday and Saturday. Rooms adjacent to the convention center are being renovated and are unavailable. A shuttle will be available from the hotel to and from the banquet at the convention center.

Purchase your banquet tickets (\$40 each) before Dec. 31 to receive complimentary bucket raffle tickets. Go to <https://wicouncil.tu.org/wicouncil/2024-witu-banquet-tickets-and-sponsorships>.

Come celebrate our 2024 Award Winners

Friends and family of our award winners are invited to attend our awards banquet to help us celebrate these amazing people.

Tom Lager will receive our prestigious Resource Award of Merit.

The Central Wisconsin Chapter will receive our Silver Trout Award, which honors an outstanding chapter each year.

Dale Dahlke of the Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter will receive our Distinguished Service Award for Youth Education.

The DNR’s Kirk Olson from the Coulee Region will receive our Robert Hunt Resource Professional Award.

Jeff Butler will receive our Distinguished Service Award for his work with the Service Partnership.

Dale Lange of the Marinette Chapter will receive our Distinguished Service for Leadership Award.

Paul Douglas of Douglas Art and Frame in Madison will receive our Reel Partner Award.

Chair's Column, with Scott Allen

Joy and the virtue of a fishless day

Entering this holiday season we are greeted, more often confronted, with "Joy." It is printed, televised, broadcasted, embossed, illuminated, scripted in cursive light.

To a trout fisher knee deep in the other season, joy can mean a 20-fish day. Joy can mean bringing to net a record fish. Joy, as the protagonist of our fishing season, has its antagonist lurking in the riffle, bend or pool.

Never oversell a fishing trip, be it an afternoon on your home water or a week in the mountains, and we all know why: it's that black and white odiferous interloper that has a way of shouldering the salmonids aside and having its way with your line, all day. But even some modicum of joy can be seen in a skunk; like so many people, they are approachable without getting sprayed. But a skunk has a way of garnering respect even when it erases your ambitions for the day.

That fishless outing gives us pause and reason to revisit the true meaning of joy in the work we put forth with Trout Unlimited.

Borrowing from Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk, he defines joy as "the happiness that doesn't depend on what happens. It is the grateful response to the opportunity that life offers you at this moment."

Coming from a 97-year-old who is as lucid and spry as many half his age, who endured life in Nazi occupied Austria, who was forcibly conscripted into the Wehrmacht, I'm comfortable listening to him and taking notes.

Brother David goes on to add "the root of joy is gratefulness... It is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful."

I'm grateful for those fishless days (just a few, thank you) and choose to set aside my kvetching, pining and foibles for the joy of liv-



Meg Allen

COUNCIL CHAIR SCOTT ALLEN ENJOYING A FISHLESS DAY

ing in a state with so many outdoor opportunities and donating my time for an organization that makes our corner of the world a better place.

The Trout Unlimited Awards Banquet will take place Feb. 3 in Oshkosh. Of course, the highlight of the evening will be a tribute to a handful of individuals we can all be grateful to and recognize the joy they bring to our organization. To

many of them, every day is a metaphorical fishless day. They are grateful for the opportunity to serve. And that is the meaning of joy.

I hope you can join us there. If not, please set aside some time to get to know them a little better through the pages of *Wisconsin Trout* and to be grateful they are among us.

Corps decides to remove both Kinni dams

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) has made an initial determination that it should remove both dams on the Kinnickinnic River in River Falls, and ecologically restore the river corridor. The recommendation followed a feasibility study begun last spring. A public comment period will follow that determination, and a final recommendation will be issued this coming spring.

TU's Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter, a stalwart supporter of dam removal for years, said, through chapter President Greg Olson,

"Kiap-TU-Wish was extremely pleased with the Army Corps of Engineers recommendation to remove both dams; that was the result we were hoping for.

"We have measured colder water temperatures on the lower Kinni that the breach in the lower dam has created and are confident that we will see the same impact on water temperatures with the removal of the upper dam.

"It also makes sense to remove the upper dam first, so as not to affect the restoration efforts in the now exposed old lakebed between the dams. To think that there is now a good chance that I see both these

dams removed and the falls returned to River Falls in my lifetime is very exciting."

While COE considered a number of options, only removing both dams and corridor restoration would carry sufficient ecological benefit to warrant COE's investment in the project. That is what COE staff reported at a mid-November conference call with the River Falls City Council and interested citizens.

After the COE briefing, city council members endorsed the recommendation with their comments. Further COE studies will aim to develop a more refined budget and identify likely funding prospects.

Early budget estimates for the project suggest costs in the range of \$15-19 million, and a timeline of about five years from commencement of work to completion.

COE suggested that if all its own funding possibilities were successfully approved, it could bring as much as \$15 million to the project. Wisconsin DNR funding could provide \$2 million as presently available, and the city, which owns the dams, would be expected to contribute a portion.

—Duke Welter



UPPER DAM TO DISAPPEAR, AS WELL AS ITS LOWER COUNTERPART

While the Army Corps of Engineers considered a number of options, only removing both dams and corridor restoration on the Kinni would carry sufficient ecological benefit to warrant their investment in the project.

Youth Camp update

We are preparing for another great year for the WITU Youth Fishing Camp. With the awesome turnout of volunteers and mentors last year, we are anticipating another fantastic camp.

Enrollment for the camp opens with our annual meeting Feb. 3 in Oshkosh. Last year we had a full roster by the end of April. If you are anticipating having a youth for the camp, please let me know at the meeting and we will hold a spot for you on the roster.

All chapters will have a spot reserved for them through Tuesday, April 30. After that, chapters with more than one student can begin signing up additional students until the roster is filled.

This year's camp is Thursday, Aug. 15 through Sunday, Aug. 18 at the Pine Lake Bible Camp between Waupaca and Wild Rose. The camp is open to all youth ages 12-16. We worked closely with the bible camp to keep our costs to chapters at \$250 per student.

If you know a youth who would be interested in attending, please reach out to your local chapter for sponsorship.

We still have openings for volunteers and mentors, so please contact me if you are interested at 920-216-7408 or chlbeck@att.net.

Linn Beck, WITU Youth Camp Director.

Dam bill now law

By Mike Kuhr, WITU Advocacy Chair

We're pleased to report that AB136/SB140 has passed both the Assembly and Senate. The bill was sent to Governor Tony Evers, who signed it into law on Dec. 6. The law is now known as 2023 Wisconsin Act 65.

We'd like to thank the bill's Authors: Senator Stafsholt (R-New Richmond) and Representative Petryk (R-Town of Washington) along with Co-Sponsors Sen. Cowles (R-Green Bay), Sen. Marklein (R-Spring Green), Sen. Nass (R-Whitewater), & Sen. Sprietzer (D-Beloit) and Rep. Zimmermann (R-River Falls), Rep. Armstrong (R-Rice Lake), Rep. Behnke (R-Oconto), Rep. Magnafici (R-Dresser), Rep. Moses (R-Menomonee) and Rep. O'Connor (R-Fond Du Lac). We also extend our thanks to Gov. Evers and his staff for their support.

This law clarifies that dam removal projects applying for funding through the Municipal Dam Safety Program are not required to provide matching dollars (dam repair projects do require the local municipality to put up matching funds). Language changes made in the prior budget by the Joint Finance

Committee created a grey area as to whether removal projects were still exempt from the matching funds. Thanks to Act 65, we now have clarity on the issue.

Flood resiliency bill

SB 222 passed the Senate on a unanimous vote this past June. Unfortunately, the Assembly chose not to move on the bill during any of the floor periods this fall. We will continue to work with our partners to advocate for Assembly approval of the bill in the coming months.

AB 222 / SB 222 would create a Pre-Disaster Flood Resiliency Grant program that would provide funding to local communities to do flood assessment work and implement nature-based solutions such as stream bank shaping to reconnect flood plains and wetlands restoration. If created, the program would be administered by WEM (Wisconsin Emergency Management). WITU has worked closely with our partners, the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Wisconsin Towns Association and the bills' authors, Rep. Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua) and Sen. Romaine Quinn (R-Cameron).

TUDARE News

By Peter Jonas
TUDARE Partnership Specialist

Are my secret streams really my secret to keep?

Anglers have a complicated relationship with secrecy. We hope a secret fly, lure or bait will give us an edge. We get a tingly feeling when a friend entrusts us with knowledge of a secret spot. But secrets also bring their own stresses and disappointments. There's nothing like the endorphin rush you get when driving to a secluded and productive stream you know well. But the deflation you experience when you round the last corner and see a car parked in your secret spot is crushing.

I have been thinking a lot about stretches of streams I am hesitant to disclose to others. The question I have been mulling is: Are my secret streams really my secret to keep? My musings on this coalesce in two distinct categories—the first ethical and the second pragmatic.

The ethics of the question are frankly a quagmire. In the Driftless Area, most productive streams are productive because they have been restored through habitat work. Our TU chapters and other volunteer partners do a fantastic job healing and maintaining streams. But the scope of our work is expanded dramatically through our partnerships with government agencies—specifically the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRSC) in the Department of Agriculture, the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) in the Department of the Interior, state DNRs, county conservation departments, and others.

What I am trying to get at is that as an angler when I put great sweat equity into discovering a productive stretch of stream, I naturally get a bit proprietary about its location. And yet, the stream and its surrounding watershed are productive because taxpayers have invested significant amounts of money and resources to restore “my” secret stream. What do I owe my fellow citizens, who (even if they don't realize it) have put their own sweat equity into restoring my secret spot thanks to the IRS?

Of course, there are counter questions. If I share my secrets with too many of my fellow citizens, will my secret spot be overloved? I will confess that whenever I drive by certain popular trout streams, I think of what Yogi Berra famously said about a great restaurant he no longer frequented, “Nobody goes there anymore because it's too

crowded.” And what if I have been made aware of a good spot through a tip from another angler? These tips are shared with the implied understanding that they are not to be shared with anybody else. Like every other angler, I would like to have a few friends left when I die.

From a pragmatic standpoint my thinking is shaped by something I heard Steve Born say more than 30 years ago: “Trout streams need friends.” This idea has been knocking around in my head for a long time, so I hope Steve actually said it, or at least something like it. The farm bill and other government conservation programs that undergird stream restoration work need constituency. Without a constituency, resources dry up.

How do people come to care about streams and their surrounding watersheds? Fishing is not the only entrée, but it is a powerful entrée for people to become engaged as conservationists. I spend a lot of time thinking about why people who do not fish should care about watersheds. Communicating the environmental impact of our work to the general public is important. But teaching a person to fish, and even daring to show a new angler some of your beloved fishing spots might lead to that person developing a visceral passion for the health of watersheds and related environmental issues.

I confess it still takes a conscious act of will for me to refrain from muttering under my breath when I turn a corner and see a car parked in “my” fishing spot. But I will strive to think of my fellow anglers, not as competitors for a scarce commodity, but as fellow friends of the streams I love and potential comrades in the important environmental work of healing our region's watersheds—regardless of whether they fish with lures, bait or flies and regardless of whether they choose to harvest fish or not. This is one small step we can all take in the important work of constituency building.

Proposals sought for National Fish Habitat Partnership funding

The Driftless Area Restoration Effort National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) is a program administered by Trout Unlimited and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. It funds planning, construction, research, monitoring and outreach work in support of native aquatic life throughout the Driftless Area.

Applications for proposals for

2025 projects are now available and can be downloaded at the bottom of the TUDARE webpage: <https://www.tu.org/conservation/conservation-areas/watershed-restoration/driftless-area-restoration-effort/>

Details of the type of projects eligible are available in the Call for Proposals document. The deadline for proposals is Feb. 2.

NFHP grants provide a fantastic opportunity for your chapter to take a leading role in a habitat, outreach or education project. The award ceiling has been increased this year to \$75,000 with a 1:1 match required. To discuss an idea or for more information on the program or questions about filling out the application, contact Sara Strassman at sara.strassman@tu.org or peter.jonas@tu.org.

Operation Pollination

In September, TUDARE participated in the signing of the Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership.

The Partnership is a collaborative of groups, individuals and communities working with Rotary's Environmental Sustainability Rotarian Action Group (ESRAG) and Rotary International to create, enhance and expand habitat for pollinators along the Mississippi River flyway.

Incorporating habitat for pollinators into trout stream projects is not a new practice for TU's Driftless Area Restoration Project. Since 2017, TU has included non-game habitats and prairie or pollinator

plantings as part of our projects to increase water quality and multi-species benefits to our work. We have also distributed seed to partners for their use in riparian areas and streamside properties.

TUDARE Manager Sara Strassman attended the signing ceremony in La Crosse, which featured Rotary International, Mississippi River Parkway Commission, National Heritage Areas, Monarch Joint Venture and the City of La Crosse.

Trout Stream Retail Therapy (With apologies to Robert Hunt)

Simms Fishing Products has selected TUDARE as one of four organizations to receive 1 percent of all the sales from their ecommerce site. This means that when you purchase something from Simms online, you can choose to have 1% of the cost of your order donated to TUDARE with no additional cost to you. None of us need another excuse to buy fishing gear, but you must admit this is about the best excuse ever. So go out there and spend some money for the trout.

Virtual Driftless Area Symposium March 11-12; Going live in 2025

The Driftless Area Symposium is March 11-12. It will be virtual again, with a goal to have it in person in 2025 in La Crosse, in conjunction with the Wisconsin Wetlands Association.



Trinity White

PETER JONAS JOINS TUDARE STAFF

Peter Jonas (right) congratulates Dwight Mader on catching his first trout during a Reel Recovery Retreat.

Peter Jonas joins TU staff

In late October Peter Jonas joined the staff of Trout Unlimited's Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TU-DARE) as the new partnership specialist. Peter will help anglers, farmers, resource professionals, environmentalists, educators, students and government officials work together to heal watersheds.

Peter is a TU life member and has served on the boards of the Southern Wisconsin and Wisconsin Clearwaters chapters. Recently he has worked to secure support and funding for stream restoration projects in Buffalo and Trempealeau counties. He looks forward to collaborating with chapters, share the latest developments in stream restoration projects from TUDARE and provide information about how individuals and your chapter can further the work of restoring and protecting our Driftless Area watersheds.

Peter developed experience and

expertise in recruiting partners, community building, public speaking and grant writing in his prior work as an ordained minister and as a founding member of RUTH—Rural Unity through Hope, a community organizing coalition.

Peter also enjoys participating in stream days with middle and high school students, being a “fishing buddy” for Reel Recovery, a program that offers cancer survivors an opportunity to learn to fly fish in a transformative community, and offering casting instruction for Stream Girls, a program in cooperation with Girl Scouts that introduces girls to fishing and stream ecology.

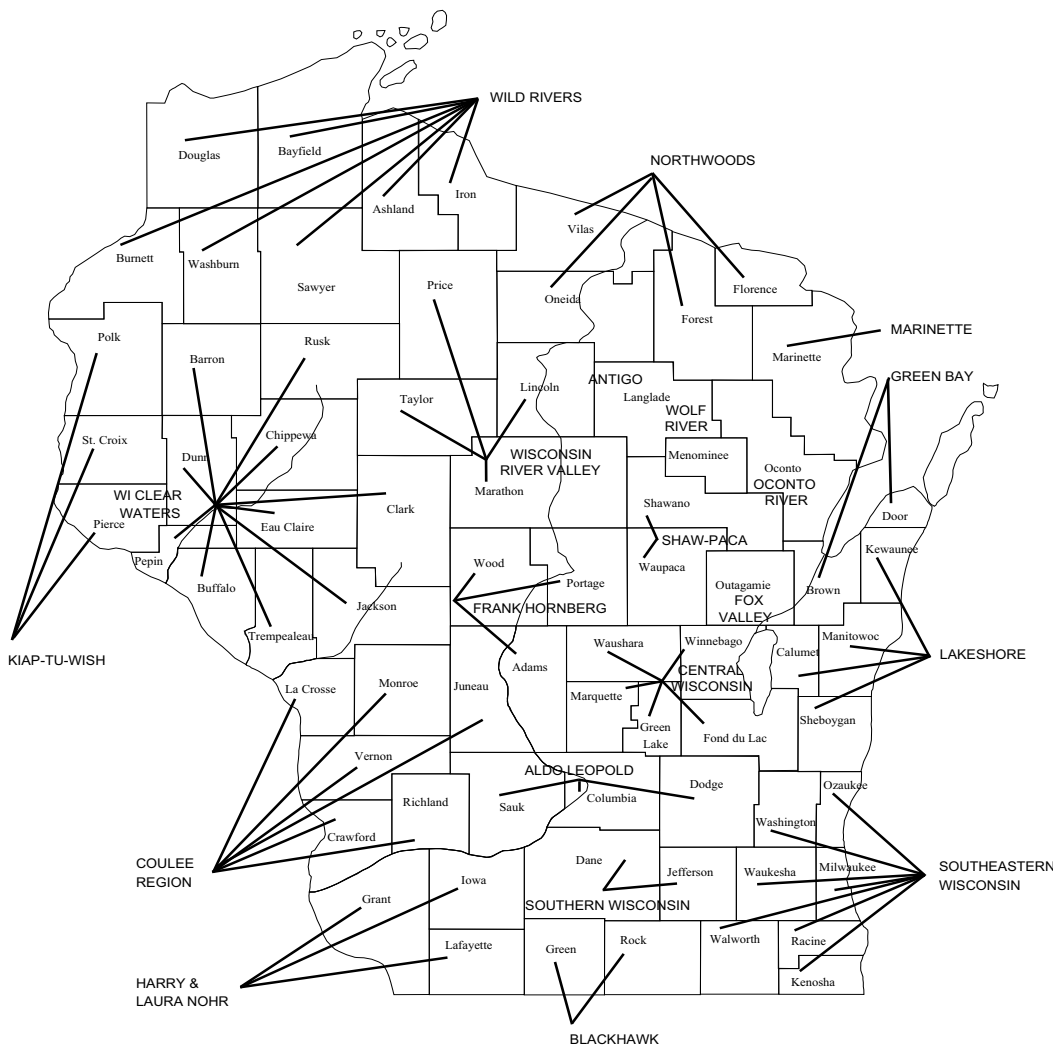
Peter and his wife Kary live in Arcadia, Wisconsin in the best kept secret in the Midwest—the northern driftless region. They have three adult children. When he's not obsessing about fishing or the health of the world's watersheds, Peter enjoys reading, woodworking, hiking, wilderness experiences and hunting.



Peter Jonas

WE ALL HAVE OUR FAVORITE SECRET SPOTS

Wisconsin TU Chapters, Presidents, and Websites



- Aldo Leopold (#375):** Dan Endres; 608-963-1374; dtendres9@gmail.com; aldoleopold.tu.org
- Antigo (#313):** Scott Henricks, 213 Mary St., Antigo, WI 54409-2536 715-623-3867; henricks51@yahoo.com
- Blackhawk (#390):** Dave Brethauer; 17348 W. Gepler Road, Brodhead, WI 53520; 608-897-4166; dave.brethauer@gmail.com; www.BlackhawkTU.org
- Central Wisconsin (#117):** Linn Beck, 160 W. 19th Ave. Oshkosh, WI, 54902; 920-216-7408; chlbeck@att.net; centralwisconsintu.org
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Visit the Wisconsin State Council's web site at wicouncil.tu.org, or find us on Facebook.

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Vice Chair, Northeast Region: Dale Lange, See Marinette County above.

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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.

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

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State Council Officers

Executive Committee includes officers and vice chairs

Scott Allen, Chair

Myk Hranicka, Vice Chair

Boyd Roessler, Secretary

Scott Wagner, Treasurer

CWTU's TroutFest Feb. 17

The Central Wisconsin Chapter invites you to our annual free event, TroutFest, a day of presentations, fly-tying, food, bucket raffles, special raffle drawings and camaraderie.

This year's TroutFest is from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 17 at the Mt. Morris Retreat and Convention Center, with food from Trout Bum Bakery.

Thanks to several of our members and past members, especially Russ and Sue Bouck, Judy Harmon in memory of Dan Harmon, and the Mark Pinkall family, we can offer some fantastic items for sale at our rummage table. We will have tables full of necks, capes, various fly-tying materials and fly-fishing items. Also, through their generosity, we will have hundreds of books for sale.

Great presentations planned

The chapter has lined up some awesome programs, such

as:

- Fly-Fishing the British Isles
- Introduction to Nighttime Mousing
- Rigging for Lake Superior Steelhead and migratory Fish
- Surveying and Recording Redds on Wisconsin Streams
- The Beauty of Nature Through the Eyes of a Photographer.

Fly shops and other vendors

Vendors will include several fly shops from around the state, and local merchants. And you can meet some of the TU teens who are doing great things for Wisconsin TU.

Bring your family and friends. There will be plenty to do, including a youth fly-tying area. It's a great way to break up the winter blahs. For more information visit <https://centralwisconsintu.org/>.



YOU CAN CHECK OUT BAMBOO RODS FROM SCOTT'S ROD SHOP

Vendors at TroutFest will include several fly shops from around the state, and local merchants. And you can meet some of the TU teens who are doing great things for Wisconsin TU. TroutFest is a great way to break up the winter blahs. For more information visit <https://centralwisconsintu.org/>.

The WAF-Stewardship Program connection

By Kim McCarthy,
Council Grant Coordinator

Most of you know that our Watershed Access Fund has been involved in the acquisition of several important parcels of land along trout water in Wisconsin. But it is unlikely that most of our membership knows about the close relationship between our fund and the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

During the last three years our fund has played an important role in three major acquisitions. One created access on the South Branch Oconto River, one created access on Dell Creek and the third created access on the Kickapoo River. All three expand fishing opportunities.

All of those acquisitions involved piecing together partnerships with a variety of conservation-minded partners, and all three share one very important common thread.

None of those purchases would have been possible without the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Land prices have soared on recreational land in Wisconsin. When a key parcel becomes available, the cost is often more than a single group can take on by itself. Usually what happens is one group, generally a land trust or a county, expresses an interest in acquiring a piece of property and then begins looking for partners who also recognize the benefits to the public of buying that particular parcel.

The group looking for partners generally intends to write a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant proposal that would cover 50 percent of the purchase price. The search for partners involves finding groups or individuals who can contribute the remaining 50 percent of the cost. It is during that time of looking for partners that we receive

inquiries about the willingness of the State Council to use our Watershed Access Fund to help acquire the parcel.

Our first questions before recommending use of Watershed Access Funds is always about the trout resources on the property. Our fund's language does not allow using the fund to acquire any parcels that do not have frontage on trout streams. The amount of water frontage and the quality of the stream involved also enter into the decision whether or not to involve our fund.

If a decision is made to join into a partnership, local chapters are also contacted to see if they have an interest in joining. Chapters have found that the positive publicity they can generate by participating in key acquisitions often is a very good use of chapter funds.

Once chapters determine whether they will participate, the total donation from all TU sources is

calculated and offered to the partnership. This participation has been critical to reaching the funding goals in all three of the acquisitions mentioned above.

But, even though TU donations have been critical, it is very important to emphasize the importance of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. Without the state money that picks up the first 50 percent of acquisition costs, most of these acquisitions would not be possible.

The stewardship program must be reauthorized by the legislature every few years. Even though the program has been very popular with the public, it has not been popular with a segment of the legislature. It will take a large push from the sporting community to get the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program reauthorized in the future. It's crucial that our members let their representatives know they want its funding to continue.

Wulff awards retired at Tight Lines

It was back around 1990. I was pretty active with the Badger Fly Fishers and I was often engaged in finding keynote speakers for our annual Spring Opener. Through the years I was able to bring in some fly fishing celebrities such as Dave Whitlock, Lefty Kreh, Gary Borger. I was about a year away from having Lee and Joan Wulff entertain at our event. Then on April 28, 1991 Lee took his last plane flight.

In the years that followed I put together the Joan and Lee Wulff Award for Conservation, a tribute of sorts to the Wulffs, with the hope of annually showcasing an individual for their outstanding contributions to conservation. My vision was to have a recipient present it each year to the next winner, as a type of "catch-and-release" concept. For the next 25 years, it was presented by the Badger Fly Fishers and Wisconsin Trout Unlimited annually in such a way. I was very grateful and fortunate for the cooperation, permission and blessing of Joan Wulff regarding the award.

As times and awards change over the years, the decision was made to retire the award by both organizations. So we decided to display them, along with the names of all past recipients, where people could publicly view. Tim Landwehr of Tight Lines Fly Fishing generously agreed to display them, and they now reside there, at 1534 Mid Valley Drive in De Pere.

I'd like to thank Joan Wulff, Badger Fly Fishers, the Wisconsin State Council, Tim Landwehr, the many recipients and everyone who supported these clubs and awards for the last quarter of a century.

—John Beth



NEW HOME FOR WULFF AWARDS

At his shop in De Pere, Tim Landwehr of Tight Lines Fly Fishing displays the two retired Joan and Lee Wulff Awards for Conservation Leadership, along with lists of all the past recipients.

Coon Creek Watershed: 100 years of conservation

Tour of Coon Creek Watershed with researcher Stanley Trimble illustrates immense environmental changes.

By Gillian Pomplun

In early September researcher Stanley Trimble travelled here to participate in the “90th Anniversary Celebration of the Coon Creek Watershed Project.” He took about 30 watershed council members and scientists on a tour of the watershed to illustrate some key aspects of the enormous environmental change that had occurred since the time of European settlement.

Four decades of research

“I wanted to portray the immensity of environmental change, both bad and good, and some of the causes and consequences,” Trimble said. “To that end, I attempted to explain and demonstrate the 11 conclusions I drew from the four decades of my team’s work, as documented in my book.”

That book is “Historical Agriculture and Soil Erosion in the Upper Mississippi Valley Hill Country,” which examines the ways in which another of the great landscapes of the United States has been transformed by human activities. It is based on almost four decades of dedicated research

The tour kicked off at the gas station in Stoddard and worked its way north in the valley. The day ended with a picnic celebration at the Genoa Outlook over the Mississippi River. The menu included sausages donated by Driftless Provisions, prepared by the Coon Creek Conservation Club and sauerkraut made specially for the event by Monique Hassman.

Eleven conclusions

Trimble’s tour was designed to illustrate and support what he described as the 11 conclusions of his 40 years of work studying the Coon Creek Watershed:

1. Seemingly haphazard and random, there is actually a systematic time and space pattern to the physical changes shown in this book, and to the resulting effects on human activity.
2. While geography may not be a detriment, it is a powerful context within which people act.
3. The destruction in the Coon Creek Watershed, as well as most of the worst soil erosion of the world historical record, was accomplished with very simple technology.
4. Climate change did not cause the landscape changes described in this study.
5. While humans were responsible for the environmental degradation of the hill country, they were also responsible for the almost miraculous recovery of the region.
6. Well-designed governmental programs can help ameliorate environmental problems.
7. Good policies and actions sometimes have some bad results.
8. Many downstream lower valley reaches will continue to have channel and floodplain aggradation (sediment build up) from legacy sediment.
9. The study clearly shows the utility of much hydrologic and geomorphologic theory.
10. The effect of sedimentation on milldams and reservoirs was much greater than the effect of milldams and reservoirs on sedimentation.
11. Significant landscape changes,

es, even those that threaten life and property, may soon be forgotten unless well documented and made known.

Begin at the end

The tour of the watershed began at the end, on a farm located just above Coon Creek’s confluence with the Mississippi River. “The Zink family farm was my first stop when I began my research in 1973,” Trimble told the group. “Oscar Zink was the first friend I made here.”

Trimble said that Zink had many memories of living on the land in the location that helped to document the changes produced on the landscape after settlement. One memory was being able to drive a full load of hay under the limb of a cottonwood tree on the floodplain. With increasing deposits of sediment from erosion, eventually this was no longer possible for his family.

“When settlers first came to this area, they tended to settle near springs for a source of good water,” Trimble pointed out. “By the turn of the century, the Zink’s spring had dried up due to lack of water infiltration on the landscape.”

Not only did the spring dry up due to lack of groundwater recharge, but the family was confronted during storm events with torrents of water, and a frightening freight train of sediment and rock, coming off the hillsides and into their yard and fields. As a result, a huge alluvial fan made up of sand and earth was deposited over the area. Trimble said the Zink family had used the deposited rock to build a diversion around their home to prevent it from being buried.

“What the family experienced in the late 1800s and early 1900s was a tragedy,” Trimble said. “The human pathos of it is hard to comprehend.”

Trimble said the deposits of sediment and rock actually moved the course of the stream across the valley. He said it was a “huge hydrologic theory brought to life right here.”

But Trimble seemed most amazed by the fact that land use changes adopted since the 1930s had such a big impact in turning things around, despite the uptick in rainfall in the watershed since the 1920s.

“With the increase in conservation measures on the landscape, more water was able to infiltrate to recharge groundwater aquifers and sustain the baseflow of the streams,” Trimble pointed out. “There is still erosion happening, especially in larger storms like we saw in 2007 and 2008, and especially in 2018, but it is greatly reduced.”

Nevertheless, Trimble said that the sediment really isn’t working its way through the watershed and out into the Mississippi River. He said that because of the wide floodplain, the stormwater runoff carrying the sediment is slowed, and most of the sediment doesn’t travel very far before it is deposited.

In his conclusions, after observation of the impacts of the 2007 storm in the watershed, Trimble observed the following:

“...there was a lack of visible erosion off no-till fields [after the 500-year storm in 2007]... and the extreme storm did not destabilize the landscape and take it back to the conditions of the 1930s... the

inherent stability of stored sediment and the inability of the storm to move it out of the watershed... relates not only to resistance of the landscape but also to the distribution of forces from such a storm. Recall that during a flood, the flow by definition exceeds the main or low flow channel and uses the flood channel or floodplain. With a wide floodplain... the flow spreads out and loses much of its tractive force to erode...the floodplain is protected against erosion by vegetation...which by slowing the flow induces deposition of sediment transported by the water. Thus, the huge flood may erode the channel and banks, but storage on the floodplain subsumes much or most of this. The result is the process of removing stored sediment from a watershed in humid, vegetated regions is a slow one.”

Trimble reminded the group that most of the sediment in the flood-

plain was stored in the stream basin in just a few decades. He said that “what we see here suggests that it will take centuries or even millennia for the sediment to be removed.”

“I don’t blame the farmers for any of the historic soil erosion,” Trimble told the group. “They came from a much more temperate climate in Western Europe where they didn’t have thunderstorms like we have here.”

Trimble said the changes on the landscape had come about as the result of government experiments in erosion control, and it took a while for farmers to adopt the ‘crazy quilt’ farming methods, such as contour strip cropping, terraces, and more.

“It was a generational thing,” Trimble said. “It really wasn’t until the 1940s and 1950s that the true impacts of the changes made on the landscape began to be felt.”



TRIMBLE IN CHASEBURG

Stanley Trimble at the intersection of Highway 162 and County Highway K, in the old Lower Chaseburg. Trimble described all of the businesses and residences that once existed here before flooding and sediment deposits forced the village to relocate to the present day area known as Upper Chaseburg.

Next steps

The next two stops on the tour included a railroad embankment that had been built in 1904, and a pond that had formed when another railroad embankment caused sediment to build up and form a “sediment shelter.”

“The sediment that has built up behind the railroad embankment built in 1904 provides a good estimate of accumulation of sediment on the floodplain by that time,” Trimble said. “With the massive debris flows that occurred in the late 1800s and early 1900s, any man-made structure such as roads, bridges or railroad embankments served to trap sediment and prevent it from moving down the watershed. There are countless such structures in the floodplain that are completely buried.”

The fifth stop on the tour was at the confluence of Wing Hollow and Coon Creek. At that location, at the coming together of the two streams,

the historical sediment deposited had built out onto the Coon Creek floodplain, forcing Coon Creek’s channel to move about 200 feet to the north.

“The differential deposition of sediment in the watershed, creating sediment sinks, is resulting in the backwater areas becoming larger, wetter and deeper,” Trimble explained. “In the 1930s, we were seeing as much as six-inches per year of sediment accretion in the floodplain, most of it between 1900-1950, and it is not moving out anything like as quickly as it was deposited.”

Trimble said that soil borings taken in the floodplain over the course of the 40 years of his work there have confirmed the rates of sediment deposition. At the sixth stop on the tour, Trimble showed where an old metal bridge had been buried in sediment in the floodplain. He said it had been necessary for his team to dig down and identify its location because it was one of

the landmarks that the old surveys had been based on. In addition, sediment had buried a road and the railroad embankment at the location.

“Streams tend to build channels big enough to suit themselves,” Trimble said. “For instance, the channel fairly quickly resumed its pre-flood size after the 2007 flood because it became a sediment sink. What this means is that sediment being displaced in a big flood isn’t being carried out of the watershed – it is simply being redistributed, and if holes are created in the flood, eventually they will fill back up.”

Story of Chaseburg

Trimble spent a lot of time talking with the group about his beloved Chaseburg, where he and his students had spent many days. He fondly lamented the demise of one of the final businesses to survive in Lower Chaseburg – the Hideaway. He pointed out where in the now-empty space the Gardner Garage, the Martiny house, the old mill and a fine “Italianate” hotel used to be located.

“At the intersection in this empty space used to be the central business district of old Chaseburg,” Trimble told the group. “It had an elegant stone bank, a large brick market, a barbershop, an old-fashioned service station, and several taverns, with many residences beyond.”

Trimble said that the bridge had once spanned the old mill pond, with a cheese factory just beyond that. He said that his book contains pictures documenting that the bridge was much closer to the top of the creek after the sedimentation from a flood in 1907 (the first big

flood in the area). He pointed out that there had once been two channels of the creek flowing through Chaseburg, and that one of them had been allowed to become plugged up, thus making flooding problems worse.

Proceeding up off the creek bottom and through the new Upper Chaseburg, one can see how the town was forced to retreat up the hillside. Moving north through the valley, Trimble explained that the reach of the stream between Chaseburg and Coon Valley contains several buried bridges. He said that Highway 162 had to be raised several times over the years to accommodate the increasing size and depth of the wetlands.

Coon Valley

Trimble pointed out that the village of Coon Valley had come close to destruction in the 1930s and 1940s, but had been saved by a forced channel enlargement. He said that eventually, soil conservation measures implemented on the landscape had pulled the village back from the brink of peril.

The group paused for lunch in Coon Valley, and enjoyed a chance to get out of the car, stretch and talk with other tour participants.

100 years of conservation

“It has been 50 years and three months since I first came here to investigate what happened in the Coon Creek Watershed,” Trimble said. “We now have almost 100 years of soil conservation measures on the landscape under our belts. What has it accomplished?”

Trimble said that the effects of

soil erosion in the Coon Creek Watershed had first been studied by a scientist named Stanford Happ in the 1930s. Trimble’s work picked up where Happ’s had ended, and expanded it.

Trimble said that in the United States, agriculture had really started in the south, but had moved north in order to take advantage of superior soils. As a result, he said, most of the land in the east is now forested.

According to Trimble, those early farmers had originally been ‘old Americans,’ but were eventually replaced by Germans and Scandinavians. He said those people had been used to a much more temperate climate where they came from in Western Europe. Here, they encountered a harsher climate with big, violent thunderstorms.

“The early immigrants thought that the soils here were inexhaustible, but they lost their infiltration capacity and resistance to erosion by about the late 1800s,” Trimble explained. “The landscape came apart after about 40 years of farming, with soil eroding and deposits of about six inches per year in the valley. This was bad trouble for the impacted communities.”

Trimble said that in all, there were 30 or more bridges in the watershed that had been buried by sediment in those years. He said that these conditions had made life very tough for the people who lived here, and they wondered what they could do about it.

“It was the Soil Erosion Service (SES) to the rescue in 1933, which became the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in 1935, and eventually evolved into today’s Natural Resources Conservation Service

(NRCS),” Trimble said. “Ag professionals had been pondering the problems like those in Coon Creek that were plaguing communities, and had come up with the technology to conserve soil. They just had to figure out how to reach local citizens with the message.”

Trimble said that from this challenge had arisen the idea of conducting a demonstration project to show people how to conserve soil, and that led to the Coon Creek Watershed Project 90 years ago.

“Part of the problem was that the Europeans were used to a three-field rotation, when what they needed was a five-six-seven year rotation, with more time in grass,” Trimble explained. “In the Coon Creek Watershed, the SCS helped farmers to survey and place contour strips, and they began to be able to show other farmers the results to convince them to consider adoption of the practices,” Trimble explained. “The soil conservation measures were effective, and by about the 1940s, people really began to be able to see the results.”

But, Trimble said, now we have a new problem, climate change. He said that this has made the storms even bigger, more intense and more frequent.

“I am not a climate-change catastrophist, but there is no denying the storms are getting larger,” Trimble said. “The 2018 storm blew me away, when the railroad tracks in Stoddard were overtopped – I never thought that could happen. These storms are exceeding anything we have seen before, and exceeding our ability to deal with it at the current time. I don’t know how this story will end.”

West Fork Sports Club update

In 2023 we completed most of the stream restoration, grading of the banks for easier access to the water and to protect against future flooding events. We designed this stretch in the middle of the campground for easier walking access to the water, in hopes of accommodating our aging population of trout anglers. We installed three LUNKER structures built by the Costa 5 Rivers College Program with Tina Murray, Curt Riedl and Paul Krahn of TU DARE.

We hope to work with 5 Rivers again with more hands-on projects. These college students have a lot of “book learning,” but little hands-on experience in conservation.

On the north end of the property we installed three weirs to collect sediment and placed boulders to increase depth. The objective is to accelerate water flow and lower the water temps throughout the watershed.

The Coulee Region Chapter held its Stream Girls day here and plan to do it again August 10, 2024. Other events include the DNR’s Learn-to-Fish program, Heddonfest and the Bamboo Rodmakers group, with Scott Grady.

We will release 2,200 brook trout in April, as we have done for the past 20 years.

The club is trying out a new reservation system for its campsites. All reservable cabins, the clubhouse,

day shelter and a few campsites can be reserved at <https://www.campspot.com/book/westfork-sportsclub>. The Brookie Cabin now has a deck to watch the sunset in the valley across the stream.

The club is always grateful when folks help out around the place, stacking wood, picking up sticks, etc. Larry, Curt and Chris Freeman sometimes post a list of chores on the clubhouse door. The club is always grateful for financial donations for maintenance and improvements. You can send donations to WFSC, PO Box 52, Viroqua, WI 54665



If you have a skill such as carpentry, woodworking, painting, landscaping or botany, your skills are valued and needed and appreciated. Please contact Curt Riedl at curt_riedl@oxfordcorp.com or Larry Riedl at Larry9699@hotmail.com if you’d like to help. The camp host is Chris Freeman at freeman53599@gmail.com or 508-932-1760

For 2024 we would love to work on a prairie, plant some more new trees, get seven more new picnic tables for the sites, new coin operations in the showers and generally improve it for our members.

If you haven’t been to “Trout Central” please come and check it out at S3649 County Rd S, Viroqua WI 54665. Be prepared to fall in love.

Tina Murray, Stream Chair

Mining update

Johnson Bridgewater, Water Advocates Organizer, River Alliance of Wisconsin.

We’re happy to report that mining pursuits in Wisconsin are quiet and slow at the moment. Also, the two companies seeking to start operations that will impact our state – Canada’s Greenlight Metals and Colorado-based Gold Resources Corp. are facing significant financial challenges.

Greenlight Metals

Greenlight Metals has been pursuing exploration drilling for the Reef Deposit on the Eau Claire River in Marathon County and the Bend Deposit on the North Fork of the Yellow River in Taylor County. However, both projects have come to a halt, with the company stating to the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) that they were awaiting financing before they can move forward with any of their Wisconsin projects.

It is also worth noting that Wisconsin TU passed two significant resolutions stating firm opposition to Greenlight Metals’ proposed projects. As with nearly all mining projects, these projects would discharge their water straight into nearby streams, thus posing a significant risk to marine life and water quality.

For full details concerning where Greenlight Metals projects stand, visit the DNR’s Recent and Potential Metallic Mining Projects in Wisconsin page at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Mines/Projects.html>

Their Marathon County project still needs further permitting from

the DNR and their Taylor County project still needs further permitting from the U.S. Forest Service.

Gold Resources Corp.

Across the state line, on the Menominee River, the proposed Back 40 project is a full two years behind schedule, without a single permit application being submitted this year to Michigan’s Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), the state’s environmental permitting agency. Gold Resources Corp. has had multiple management shake ups this year and their stock price has completely collapsed during the last three months. Visit the DNR’s mining page for more details.

Across the state

I spent a wonderful evening with the State Council talking about both statewide and regional mining issues during their December virtual meeting. For a pdf file of my presentation, email me at jbridgewater@wisconsinrivers.org with the subject line “Trout Unlimited Mining PDF.”

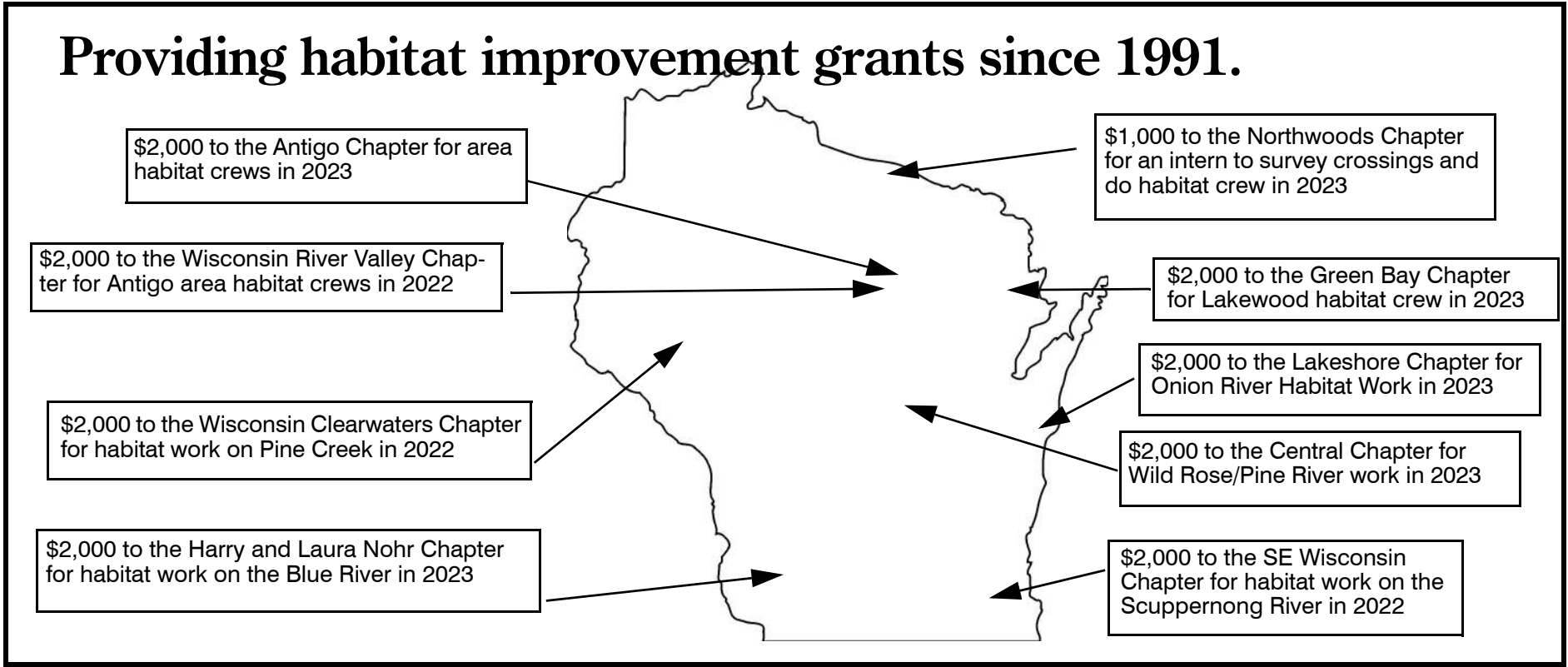
Although things are quiet here in Wisconsin, regional mining interests in both Minnesota and Michigan are really heating up, so the River Alliance and others have been reaching across borders to build a regional organizing network.

If you appreciate these mining updates, and would like to stay up-to-date on our other mining outreach efforts, River Alliance of Wisconsin has a dedicated “Mining Updates” email that you can sign up for. Simply visit <https://wisconsinrivers.org/mining/>

Please support Friends of Wis. TU in 2023

The 2024 grant period for the Friends of Wisconsin TU is well underway. Chapters have received the new applications, and we're already receiving grant requests. We can now provide grants up to \$2,500, compared to the previous \$2,000 limit. Thanks go to our generous donors who continue to support the Friends of Wisconsin TU grant program.

Providing habitat improvement grants since 1991.



Our Friends of Wisconsin TU

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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

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New venue for FVTU's Cabin Fever Day

Fox Valley Chapter leaders tackle last-minute venue change for its Cabin Fever Day event. It will go on as planned January 20 at its new location: The Bubolz Nature Preserve.

By Doug Nelson,
Cabin Fever Day Chair, Fox Valley Chapter

As I write this, the tryptophan has barely worn off from Thanksgiving and I've shoveled only once, but I've got Cabin Fever.

I began to feel symptoms in June when Norm Christnacht and John Barkmeier contacted me about taking over the committee that makes the Fox Valley Chapter's Cabin Fever Day happen. They had been organizing our fundraiser for a few years and were ready to step back. Luckily for me they only stepped back, not out, because we've had to make some big changes in a hurry, and their help made everything easier.

Long-time venue sold

Many of you know that the Grand Meridian, where we've held our event for years, has been sold and will become a church. Our 50th Anniversary celebration was one of the last secular gatherings to be held there.

The search for a new venue began with the hope that we could keep the January 20 date we had reserved with the Grand Meridian, because ours is one of the earliest events on the state TU calendar and we didn't want to compete with and complicate arrangements for others.

After visiting several available venues, we found the location that worked best is the facility at Bubolz Nature Preserve, just north of Appleton on County Highway A. It is bright, the view is great and there's a big, welcoming fireplace. And we're supporting another conservation-focused non-profit.

We're also excited that our banquet will be catered by Van Abel's, so we know the food will be excellent.

I am fortunate to have experienced committee members who will help make this a memorable event. Some long-term committee members also stepped back but have remained involved, so we're benefitting from their experience.

Dave Coonen is handling the bucket raffle, taking over for Tom Lager, who did this for years.

As usual, expect to find a variety of high-end rods, reels and gear to take a chance on winning. It's been a couple of years since we had a silent auction, but Tim DeHart will gather a collection of interesting items to bid on. Jeff Moreau and his family will again be showcasing used equipment for sale. He's always able to bring in some great "finds."

Once again, we are grateful to Scott Grady for his donation of a handmade bamboo rod and reel package. This is always a highlight event and Scott, with his associate, will be on site to demonstrate what is involved in building a high-quality rod from bamboo "planks."

Over the years, Scott has donated more than \$50,000 worth of his rods to a variety of TU fundraisers. We are always grateful to him. This year will be a little different as Cabin Fever Day will kick off the Scott Grady Rod Sweepstakes and the winner will not be announced until the Spring, so there will be opportunities to purchase tickets online for a couple of months.

Great speaker lineup

We have some interesting speakers scheduled. Seth Waters, who owns the Dark Waters Fly Shop in Iron River, Michigan, will discuss fishing the Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin. It would be difficult to find someone more enthusiastic about what he does than Seth, and his knowledge of the border streams is unsurpassed.

He recommended we line up his friend, Lance Prado, owner with his wife of the Root River Rod Company in Lanesboro, MN. His shop is in Minnesota's Driftless Area, so he'll provide a little different look at an area many of us fish.

Tim Landwehr from Tightlines Fly Shop in DePere always has a lot of insight into fishing areas near us and the newest information on equipment.

Tickets available online

Like last year, ticket sales for Cabin Fever Day will be entirely online at foxvalleytu.org, and we must turn in a final count to Van Abel's on January 10. If you require a meal to accommodate dietary restrictions, please indicate that at the time you purchase your ticket.

See the ad in this issue of Wisconsin Trout for more information.

As you probably know, all proceeds from Cabin Fever Day and Scott Grady's rod sweepstakes are used to support the work of restoring and maintaining trout streams in central Wisconsin to provide great fishing opportunities for everyone. We work with the DNR and the Central Wisconsin Chapter to maximize habitat, clean out brush and fallen trees and enhance the coldwater environment to preserve the resource for the future.

Please come to Cabin Fever Day on January 20. You'll find friends you didn't know are members, meet some interesting new people who share your love of fishing, enjoy a great meal in a beautiful venue, learn from some really enthusiastic professional fishermen, and have a chance to upgrade your equipment and contribute to a good cause. How better to spend four hours in January?

Watershed Access Fund: Obtaining public access

The Watershed Access Fund continues to help fund important additions to public access on our trout streams. In September 2023, this fund, along with a group of partners, acquired an important parcel along the Kickapoo River that creates an 18-mile stretch of river under public access. As we enter 2024, we'll continue to search for more opportunities to increase public access to our trout streams. Thanks to all of you who make these acquisitions possible by donating to this important program.

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Dry or die in central Wisconsin:

Dry-fly fishing in the Central Sands Region

By Kyle Siebers

It was a warm sunny day on a stream in Central Wisconsin. I had crept into position along the stream where I could see a pool I knew usually contained an active fish or two. I was hoping to find something hatching, but was prepared to blind cast a grasshopper pattern if there was nothing obvious hatching.

Sure enough, there was a fish holding mid-stream, inches below the surface. This fish was clearly looking to eat. I watched for a while and didn't see it make any sort of feeding moves. I decided the size 14 Royal Wulff that was still tied to my tippet after the other day's outing would be a fine place to start. I unhooked the fly from the keeper and peeled some line out from the reel. I watched the fish for a moment more. It was still there. Still unaware. Still catchable.

I checked my back cast for obstructions and then looked back to the fish to see it bolt away. I hadn't even made a cast. Not even a false cast. The sun was in a favorable position, so I knew a shadow had not spooked the fish. I had successfully snuck into position without spooking the fish so that wasn't an issue. The fish seemed to know the exact second it needed to flee to preserve its well-being. The fish around here are like that sometimes.

Despite my failure on that first fish of the day I crept up to the next pool and spotted my second target. Things played out almost exactly as the first scenario, except this time the fish moved three feet from its lane and gently sipped my fly. I caught that one. A scrappy brown of about eight inches.

Fly fishing the Central Sands Region of Wisconsin is a challenge not easily replicated in other parts of our state. Dry fly fishing is often the most efficient way to fish the streams in Central Wisconsin. Some spots might set up better for nymphs, while others are better for streamers, but that requires changing flies and tippets between spots. Deciding to fish a dry fly all day lets you fish more water, without constantly changing out your rig. We call that "dry or die."

Now, I'm not a dry fly snob, chas-

tising anyone that would stoop so low as to fish a double nymph rig. I fish nymphs, and I fish streamers. I enjoy employing those tactics when the situation requires. They all have their time and place. I simply choose to fish dry flies more often than not because I enjoy fishing dry flies. Deciding to go "dry or die" also allows you to hunt, stalk and target individual fish unlike fishing nymphs and streamers. That's a big reason why I love it. The visual aspect of dry-fly fishing is so engaging.

Waters clear and calm

Our waters are typically quite clear and very calm. We don't often have riffles and rapids to disguise a clunky approach, or a sloppy cast, so we rely on wind, rain, dirty water or the black of night to disguise us. If Mother Nature is unwilling to provide us with one or more of those cloaks, then stealth and patience are crucial. An argument can be made for persistence, as well. Let's talk a little more about each of these.

Stealth

As with trout fishing nearly anywhere in the world, stealth is always a big part of success. Walking slowly and quietly along the stream will help to avoid spooking fish. Using any available cover to hide your approach helps, too.

The amount of available cover can vary wildly from season to season. In the winter and spring months of the early season the grasses and sedges are usually lying flat and brown along the banks, sometimes even buried under snow. The trees and shrubs within the riparian corridor are devoid of leaves. Still, using a small patch of standing grass, or a bare cluster of dogwoods to hide your approach and conceal your casting location can go a long way in helping you lay a cast over a wary trout.

Pay attention to the sun as well. Is it casting my shadow on fishy locations?

Crouching, kneeling, belly crawling and even wearing camouflage all have their own pocket on the metaphorical fly vest. Another form of stealth is longer casts with longer leaders and finer tippets. If you no-

tice that you're spooking fish into the next spot as you move upstream, consider backing off and circling wide around them. Sacrificing a spot or two to leapfrog spooked fish and get on fresh water is often a difference maker. This is especially helpful when hopper fishing when streams are low and clear.

Patience

Patience can be relative to the fishing style you engage in, the hatch you're targeting or even the individual fish. If you're streamer fishing, patience might mean three casts at the sweet spot instead of one. For nymphs maybe it's 30 casts instead of six. If you're fishing the stonefly hatch, patience might mean sitting in one spot on the bank for 10 minutes waiting for a rise before moving on to watch the next piece of water. If you're hopper fishing, sitting on the bank waiting for a rise might leave you fishless and frustrated. If you stumble upon the right fish, patience might mean waiting an hour for it to start rising again after a bad cast puts it down.

I know of one angler who noticed early in the day that the fish would only rise when a cloud blew over. He had the patience to cast only when the stream was in the shadow of a cloud. He did a lot of sitting and waiting that day, but he caught more fish than I did. I spent my day making lots of blind casts and I caught some fish, but he had the patience to wait for the conditions that gave him the best odds.

Persistence

Persistence usually pays off in whatever situation it is applied to. As for trout fishing in the Central Sands, persistence can take many forms. Say it's March and you're out looking for stoneflies. Persistence might mean driving around to half a dozen bridges to look for bugs or rising fish. Maybe it's May and you're streamer fishing. Persistence might mean fishing your streamer through a half mile of stream instead of just a couple hundred yards. Now say it's Hex season. Persistence might mean fishing four nights a week looking for that steady hatch instead of two nights.

Maybe you're hopper fishing. Persistence might look a lot like streamer fishing. You might need to fish more water or fish multiple spots to find the success you hope for. Perhaps you're rigged with nymphs and your go-to spot gave up a goose egg. Persistence might mean fishing a handful more spots to find some active fish. Or maybe you return to your first spot later in the day in hopes the fish have changed their moods. It's your go-to spot for a reason, after all.

Viewing persistence with a wider lens might mean fishing a good-looking section of stream for a second or third time if your initial adventure yielded poor results. Perhaps the fish weren't in that section at the time of year you first fished it. Maybe they all had full bellies from some unnoticed food source earlier that morning. Maybe you just weren't wearing your lucky hat. Having the persistence to return and fish a spot again after your initial run left you fishless might be the hardest skill to cultivate.

If you keep turning up zeros, maybe the spot actually isn't as good

as it looks, but that's still valuable knowledge to have.

Stoneflies

Close your eyes and imagine that first beautiful spring day of the year. Bright warm sunshine, smells of earth, songbirds migrating. This is stonefly weather. The stonefly hatch can cause quite a bit of excitement among fly anglers in the Central Sands Region, because after a long, cold winter it can be the first chance to consistently target rising trout with dry flies. Fishing the stonefly hatch is also a good way to ensure that you're fishing with temperatures above freezing. The three keys we just talked about all play a role in fishing the stonefly hatch.

You might find a few stoneflies as early as January, or as late as May, but March and early April is the real heart of the hatch. I usually spend a fair amount of time checking bridges and other access point for bugs and rising fish. I don't focus much on the upper reaches of our streams because most of the fish will be in the middle-to-lower reaches for the winter.

I like spots that get a bit of sunshine at this time of year. March can be cold and some sun can help to get the stoneflies active, as well as the trout looking to eat them. I employ patience when I'm out looking for stoneflies. Waiting and watching for minutes at a time, looking for bugs and rises, can increase your odds of success. Of course, blind casting for hours can produce fish too, but that boils down to personal preference.

When I do find a rising fish, or even a piece of water I want to blind cast to, that's when I rely on stealth. Hiding behind bushes, sneaking on my knees and staying in the shadows all have their time and place on a trout stream in March. If you fish a spot or two and come up fishless, remember persistence. Maybe try one last spot before you head home. Or maybe come back and fish it later in the week. It's rare to target stoneflies, find bugs, find rising fish and catch them with just one day of effort.

As for fly patterns to match the stonefly hatch, you can get as simple or as complicated as you'd like. Flies like a Stimulator, Madam X, or Elk Hair Caddis will all work fine. Stoneflies almost never sit still when they're on the water, so choosing a pattern that you can skate and skitter is often a good bet. Size your selection to match what you're seeing when you're out there. Black is a go-to color, but gray, tan or brown will move fish as well.

Mayflies

There are a handful of Mayfly species you might encounter in Central Wisconsin. The species in question are commonly referred to as Baetis, or Blue Winged Olives, Hendricksons, Sulphurs and Ephorons. You might find olives at any time of year, but March to May will be your best chance to see a fishable hatch. April is when I've most frequently seen them. April into May might provide a showing of Hendricksons. Sulphurs can be found from May into June and July, but mid-May to early June is when I've seen the best activity. Ephorons typically hatch later in the summer.

See **DRY OR DIE**, page 25



TROUT ARE WARY IN THE CENTRAL SANDS

The finned residents of the Central Sands streams are some of the wariest. If you're expecting to catch 50 fish in a day of fishing central Wisconsin, you should lower your expectations. It's not a numbers game in central Wisconsin. The challenge is the reward in fishing the streams in this area.

Stunting and brown trout

Are we seeing this in our streams?

By Matthew Mitro
Wisconsin DNR, Office of Applied
Science, Fisheries Research

Lately I've been thinking about the idea of stunted growth in trout populations in streams. In colloquial or everyday language, stunting may simply refer to fish that are smaller than we think they ought to be. We may think of this occurring in streams seemingly overpopulated with small or skinny trout.

From a scientific perspective, stunting is more formally considered a special case of density-dependent growth. Here, high densities of trout lead to slow growth and the attainment of sexual maturity at an unusually small size.

Density-dependent growth in fish populations is a deceptively complex concept. On the surface it appears simple: trout growth rate depends on the number of trout living in a stream. For a limited or fixed resource like food or space, the more fish that compete for that resource, the less of that resource is available for any one fish and growth rates consequently decline. Many factors interact with fish density to affect growth, especially in complex environments like streams, which can obscure the relationship between fish density and growth.

A cursory look at the scientific literature shows a rich body of work on this topic but with many questions as yet unanswered.

Studies of stunted growth in animals have largely focused on freshwater fish because fish exhibit indeterminate growth, in which growth occurs throughout a fish's life. Fish grow rapidly when young, and growth slows, sometimes significantly, as they reach and pass the age of maturity.

Growth may also slow significantly depending on food availability and water temperature but could increase if environmental conditions become favorable. When eggs collected from wild trout are raised in a hatchery environment, for example, where conditions are by design favorable for growth, growth rates un-

obtainable in streams can easily be had. There is generally not a fixed length or age at which trout reach maturity, as maturity can be attained across a range of sizes and ages and differ between males and females.

I have not seen much written about the topic of stunting in the context of trout living in streams. There are a few studies on stunting of trout in ponds and lakes. I think there is an important reason why this is the case. Trout in stillwater environments are generally wide-ranging, non-territorial foragers, and when they compete for the same limited resource, say food, they do so indirectly. If trout abundance is too high relative to the available food resource, food consumption by any one trout reduces food availability for all other trout. Collectively, a large abundance of trout in a pond with limited food availability can lead to slow growth among all trout. This is typically not the case in streams.

Territories a factor

Trout in streams are territorial and compete for space. As streams are heterogeneous environments where habitat features such as depth and stream velocity and cover vary widely, some territories defended by trout will be more profitable than others. Profitability of a territory can be thought of in terms of energy consumed versus energy expended. When trout consume more energy than they expend to hold and defend a position in the stream, they grow, sometimes considerably.

In any given stream, the best foraging sites available will be used first. As anglers, we seek out and fish those spots to catch larger trout. As fish abundance increases, more fish are forced to occupy less profitable foraging sites. There are far more less-desirable foraging sites in streams than there are sites that will grow a trophy trout, so we will see a larger number of smaller trout or trout in poorer body condition as abundances increase. But there is still the potential for larger trout to

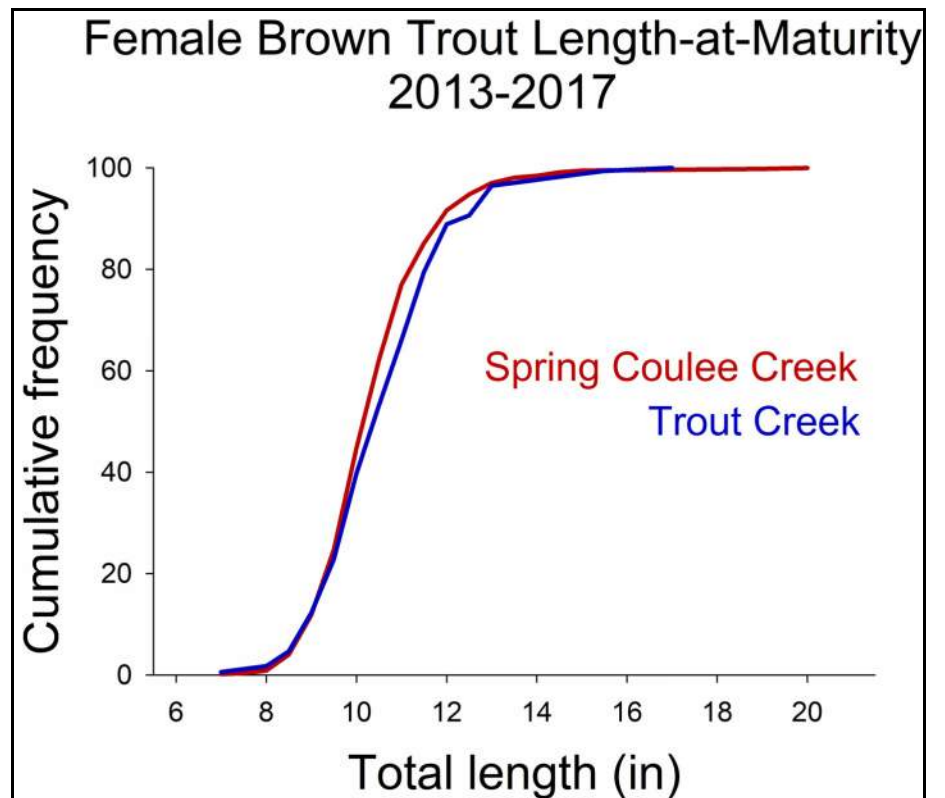


FIGURE 1

be present in a stream regardless of how high the density is.

This is important. An increased density of trout in a stream does not necessarily mean there are no large trout present or that trout do not grow big, just that there are more smaller trout present. The overall reduction in growth in a high-density trout population in a stream is not due to a decrease in growth of all trout. Rather, it is due to an increase in the number of slower-growing trout.

The relationship of density versus growth takes the form of a negative power function. As density increases, growth decreases, but not linearly. In a negative power function, the decline in growth is very steep for small changes in density at low densities. At higher densities, as density increases, the declines in growth become less and less, approaching zero.

This functional relationship between density and growth has been demonstrated in many different studies of trout and other fishes. And this functional relationship between density and growth has important implications for fisheries management.

I am going to illustrate some of these ideas using data from two Driftless Area streams I have worked on over the years: Spring Coulee Creek in Vernon County and Trout Creek in Iowa County.

Spring Coulee Creek can be considered a relatively high-density trout stream and Trout Creek a relatively low-density trout stream. From 2013 to 2017, the density of brown trout, age 1 and older, ranged from 1,159 to 1,915 per mile in Spring Coulee Creek and from 304 to 461 per mile in Trout Creek.

The evidence for earlier maturation in high-density brown trout populations is not compelling in the data sets for these two streams. When we survey trout populations during spawning in autumn, we can reliably identify mature males and females based on secondary sex characteristics like body shape and color and by the fact that many mature trout are able to express milt or eggs.

For brown trout we identified as mature females, the length-frequency histograms for Spring Coulee Creek and Trout Creek largely over-

lap (Figure 1). Most mature females are 9-12 inches in length. Some are smaller and some are larger, but there is no obvious shift to more female trout maturing at a smaller size, which might be indicative of stunted growth, in the high-density stream.

Another way to view the size-at-maturity data is to plot a cumulative frequency curve. Figure 2 shows the cumulative frequency of mature female brown trout by length for Spring Coulee Creek and Trout Creek. Maturation at a smaller size should shift such a curve to the left for Spring Coulee Creek, suggesting that more female brown trout are maturing at a smaller size in that high-density trout stream.

Evidence of stunted growth? Perhaps, but I think that contention is arguable. The shift appears small considering there are 4 to 5 times as many brown trout per mile, age 1 and older, in Spring Coulee Creek than in Trout Creek. And again, from an angling perspective, most of the trout you might catch in either stream will be 9-12 inches in length.

Lastly, I want to show an example of a negative power function as fitted to brown trout data for Spring Coulee Creek. Figure 3 shows density versus growth for all brown trout ages one and older for five years, 2013-2017. The data are noisy, as is typical for fisheries population-level data, but the fitted curve shows how growth tends to decrease as density increases. Here I want to return to the management implications of such a functional relationship. Given that the greatest changes in growth occur in response to changes in density at lower densities and that lesser changes in growth occur in response to changes in density at higher densities, for high density trout streams, a very large decrease in density would likely be needed to effect a noticeable change in growth. In other words, increasing harvest may not be a practical way to increase growth in high-density brown trout populations.

So, what does this all mean for trout density and stunted growth in Wisconsin streams? Here are my thoughts:

To the extent that stunted growth

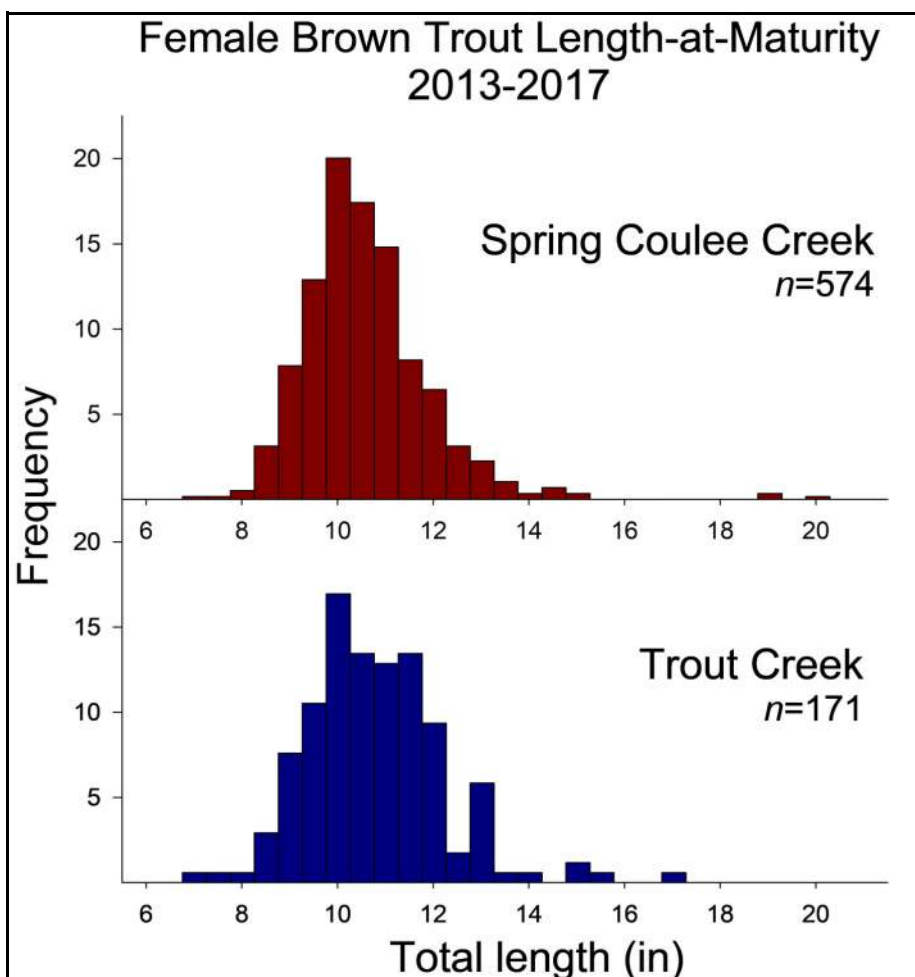


FIGURE 2

occurs in trout streams, it is not the same as stunted growth issues that occur in ponds or lakes. Even in streams with lots of small trout, there is still likely the same potential for larger trout no matter what the overall density of trout is.

Unlike ponds and lakes, Wisconsin streams, particularly in the Driftless Area, can be subject to severe flood events that effect significant changes in trout density. In other words, if there is a high trout density problem in a stream, Mother Nature may sometimes be the fix.

While we may see more smaller trout in some streams, it is not clear that we are seeing any significant decreases in length-at-maturity. It would likely be informative to look at length-at-maturity versus density data for more Wisconsin trout streams.

High-density brown trout

streams can likely sustain greater harvest pressure, but it is unlikely that greater harvest pressure will lead to noticeably higher growth rates short of achieving drastic reductions in density.

Anglers may certainly perceive stunted growth, but it is important to keep in mind that the fish an angler sees in a stream are a small sample of what's there, as compared to what we see in a scientific fisheries survey. When I go fishing, for example, I often catch a disproportionate number of small trout compared to what I know are in a stream based on electrofishing surveys.

If we want more larger trout in our streams, we need more habitat that increases profitability for trout in terms of energy expended versus energy consumed. This too is a deceptively complex issue.

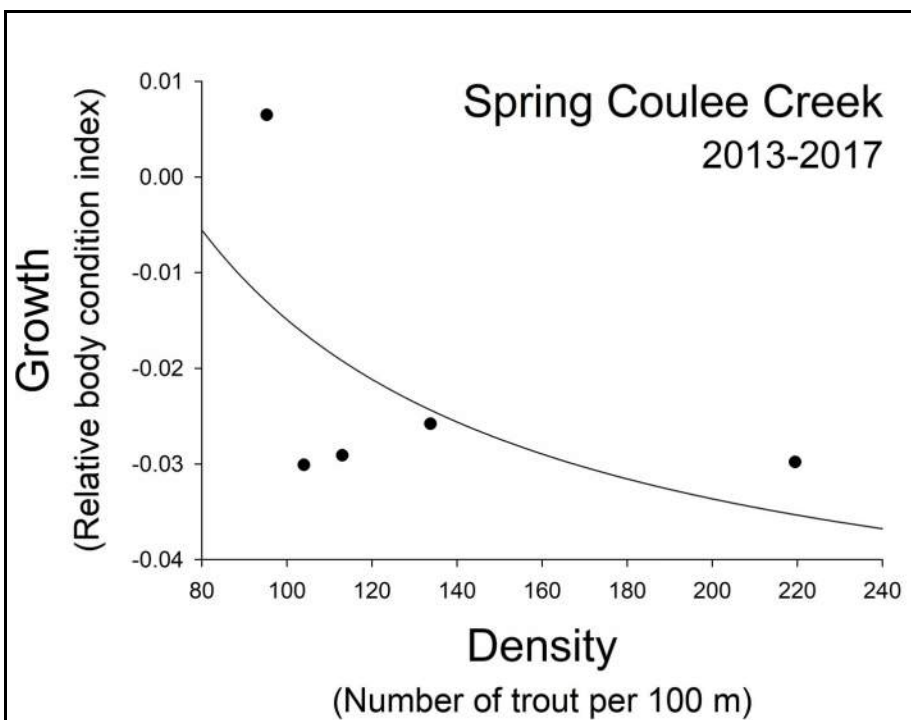



FIGURE 3

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Proceeds will support our Fox Valley TU stream habitat work



foxvalleytu.org

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All tickets to this event must be purchased online through: foxvalleytu.org NO later than January 10, 2024
NO tickets will be sold at the door

Women's Clinics gear stolen

Everyone encouraged to watch for the sale of the rods, reels, waders, boots and more.

For more than a decade, leaders of our Women's Flyfishing Clinics have steadily and carefully built up a collection of fly rods that better fit a women's hand, practice rods, waders, boots, fly cases, water bottles, buffs and more. In early December every last item associated with the clinics was stolen from a storage locker.

This is devastating, undoing the immeasurable levels of work, time and generosity of so many.

We're asking everyone to please keep your eyes open. It's not likely that the thief stole all this to start up their own clinics, so it will probably find its way to Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, pawn shops, garage sales or other venues. The items are

fairly distinctive and so should be notable, and if we have an army of people on the lookout, maybe we'll recover some of them or catch the thieves.

Please keep an eye out for these items:

- 18 five-weight Echo Base 9-foot rods. They are green with the rod reel case having the Echo logo on it. These rods are green and say Base 590-4 on them. The numbers won't easily come off. They are magic marker on the cases and paint pen on the rods.
- Two Echo Traverse kits, brown in color, and say Traverse 590-4 on them.
- A wide variety of boots and wad-

ers, newer and older, as well as Women's Clinic-branded water bottles and buffs.

If you have a potential sighting of a stolen item, please contact Sheriff Deputy Elliott Roger at 608-266-3456 or elliott.roger@daneshersheriff.com. You can reference case number 230521682.

In addition, we're looking at possible insurance coverage and seeking funding to purchase more

combos from Echo at a discount. With a women's clinic session in Oshkosh in February and clinics filling up for the spring, we have to keep moving on all options. This is a huge setback, but for such an important initiative we will find a way to continue. We're appreciative of the watchful eyes and continued support of the members of SWTU.

—Drew Kasel, SWTU



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Pictured: Anton, Aventuron shop manager.

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Travelin' for trout

A Central Wisconsin Chapter leader has followed the TU National meetings all over the country, and he's fished many amazing waters along the way.

Words and photos by Tom Meyer.
Central Wisconsin Chapter

It's been called the Trout Unlimited national meeting. Now they call it CX3, which stands for community, coldwater and conservation, and it's been defined as the annual "gathering." I call it an adventure. I look forward to it every year, visiting places I've never been, meeting interesting people and fishing rivers that if not for TU deciding to have the annual meeting there I would probably never see. My wife goes with me and enjoys the adventures as well, even though she does not fish. We have attended most of them in recent years.

Here are some recent national meetings.

- 2013 - Madison, Wisconsin.
- 2014 - Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- 2015 - Scranton, Pennsylvania.
- 2016 - Bozeman, Montana.
- 2017 - Roanoke, Virginia
- 2018 - Redding, California
- 2019 - Rogers, Arkansas
- 2020 - Cancelled/Covid
- 2021 - Cancelled/Covid
- 2022 - Portland, Maine
- 2023 - Spokane, Washington
- 2024 - Twin Cities, Minnesota

Although there are actual meetings that take place during the five-day event, many are more like hour-long programs with professional videos and slide shows. The best one is the "State of TU," with Trout Unlimited President Chris Wood. There is always a hosted fishing day, and in 2023 in Spokane there were two.

I also fish on my own a couple of times while at these week-long gatherings. On hosted fishing days you are paired up with a local volunteer fisherman who knows the area. The host provides the ride, but you bring your own gear.

It's like fishing with a friend, and you get taken to some beautiful scenic rivers that the hosts usually know well. Nobody nets your fish or untangles your line or ties on your flies.

The day usually costs you about \$60, which includes breakfast at the hotel and a box lunch to take along. The hosts are not allowed to accept tips.

Sometimes you do get hooked up with an actual fishing guide who volunteers their time for that day. In 2017 for the Bozeman event I had an amazing guide. She was a full-time fishing guide and fly shop manager for a Bozeman fly shop. She was dating a DNR fish biologist

from the area who came along with us to the Madison River.

In Roanoke, Virginia my host was Mark Taylor, the eastern region communications director for TU. He was a cool, friendly and smart guy. I still am in touch with him on occasion. We fished the Smith River in Virginia and caught some browns and rainbows.

In Arkansas the host was a local TU member who took me and another fisherman, who I'll refer to as "Willie," below the Beaver Dam on the White River. We had less than three hours to fish because at noon the dam releases water.

We were having a ball catching stocked rainbows on nymphs when the alarm sounded, which means you have five minutes to get out of the river. The water will rise quickly, sometimes by 200 percent.

The host and I got out immediately but Willie waited too long and then struggled to get out of the river. We saw him fall and go under, so me and the host waded out, each grabbed an arm and assisted him to shore.

While at the parking lot having our box lunch, Willie took off all his clothes and hung them up in some trees to dry. He then sat down in a folding chair buck naked to eat his lunch. The other fishing groups were starting to arrive as this was the designated lunch spot, and some of them were women. I said to Willie "Dude, cover yourself up." Our host offered him some of his extra clothing, but he ignored us both.

During lunch we were joined by at least six others, including famous fisherman, fly tyer and engineering professor David Knowles of Arkansas, who has since passed away. He gave everyone a box with three dozen of his hand-tied flies and entertained us with stories about fishing the White River during the last 50 years. Interestingly, nobody said a word about the naked guy seated in a chair a few feet from the group.

There are so many talented and interesting TU members, and it's fun to meet folks from around the country with like-minded goals and interests.

This annual event also includes a conservation tour, when they take members in buses to local TU project sites.

One year I rode on the bus next to the 2011 recipient of TU's highest award. It was our very own Duke Welter, who at that time was the outreach coordinator of TUDARE. I enjoy listening to Duke and always learn a lot from him. He knew ev-



A RIVER IMPROVEMENT PROJECT IN VIRGINIA

Meyer fished the Smith River in Virginia and caught some browns and rainbows with TU Eastern Region Communications Director Mark Taylor.

everyone on the bus and they knew him.

During my travels around the country attending these events, I have discovered that everyone knows Duke. As if that wasn't enough of a treat, we stopped at a park for lunch and we each received a raffle ticket. Prizes were drawn and I won a really nice Patagonia fishing vest.

When you check in at the hotel for the CX3, everyone gets a swag bag with some cool items like Orvis flies and gear, Yeti mugs, books, a hat, locally donated items you can't live without and coupons for free stuff! TU also sponsors a hospitality room at the hotel with complimentary drinks, snacks and fishing stories.

Montana was conveniently located on the way to the 2023 CX3 in Spokane, so we left a week early and I fished my way through Montana prior to the event. In Spokane my Wednesday fishing host was Paul Parson, an engineer employed by TU who lives in Missoula.

During the 2 1/2 hour drive to the St. Joe River in Idaho, he talked about his job removing small dams that were constructed in the 1930s to power remote ranger stations throughout the west. He and a crew would bring in camping gear and tools they need for a week to remove these dams, which have been obsolete since the arrival of modern electricity and generators. They also brought in fishing gear and he shared stories about fishing some pristine, rarely fished waters.

The St. Joe River fished great that day with a morning BWO hatch and an afternoon midge hatch. We caught many nice cutthroats and some cutbows.

My Thursday host was Otto Klein, owner of the Spokane Indians, a minor league baseball team affiliated with the Colorado Rockies. He was also the president of the Spokane Falls Chapter of TU. We floated the Spokane River for redband rainbows in his inflatable raft. He brought along a bottle of Dry Fly bourbon which is distilled in Spokane. When a fish was landed he would anchor the boat and pour us each a small glass of bourbon to celebrate.

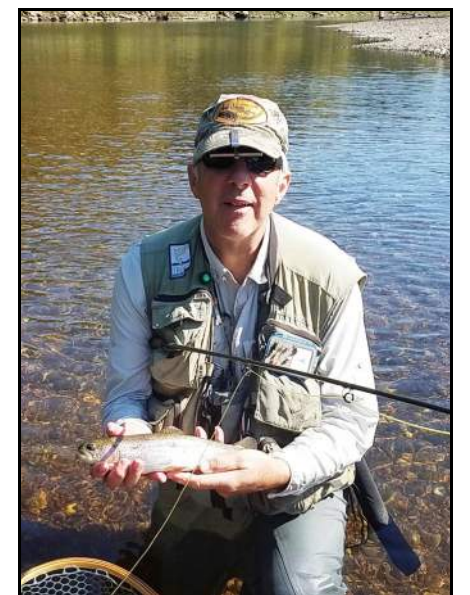
I met a guy at the Saturday night banquet that I'll call Jeremiah Johnson. He looked like a mountain man, with white hair flowing down to his back and a full beard. It

turned out he was a highly educated man and once was a business executive in California. He got divorced and was tired of the whole California lifestyle, so he moved to Montana, bought a log cabin on the Flathead River and went "native."

He was a character, but friendly and knowledgeable. He put on a fly-casting demo one day during the event. He was good friends with Hilary Hutcheson, who also put on an hour-long program. She is a fishing guide, author, fly fishing TV personality, YouTube star and the owner of Lary's Fly Shop and Guide Service in Columbia Falls, Montana. Jeremiah said she and her guides often stay at his cabin between trips.

At the Friday night banquet TU presents most of its awards. Saturday night there is another banquet where Chris Wood presents the Mortenson Award, and there is a keynote speaker.

Even with the fishing days, the conservation tour and going to a banquet, during the five-day event my wife and I usually find time to spend together, with just the two of us. We like to check out a museum, find a hotspot for dinner and just be tourists. One of the best things about the CX3 is that the dates, location, hotel choices and itinerary are planned out by the TU staff. You just have to show up.



TOM MEYER FISHES THE WHITE RIVER IN ARKANSAS

He had less than three hours to fish because at noon the dam releases water. Another angler almost didn't get out in time.



THE SPOKANE RIVER, HOME TO REDBAND RAINBOW TROUT

Meyer's host on this river was Paul Parson, an engineer employed by TU who lives in Missoula.

2023 a great year for Stony Brook and TIC

In May the Friends of Stony Brook will be starting and completing another 1,000 feet of stream restoration to continue transforming it from a "highway ditch" to a meandering coldwater stream.



WITNESSING THE SUCCESS OF THEIR PREDECESSORS

TIC students viewing a sampling of trout their fellow students planted in Stony Brook the past two years.

At the October fall trout planting day on Stony Brook, DNR fish biologist Angelo Cazzola demonstrated electro-shocking to the TIC students from Chilton schools. He said that trout measured and recorded have survived four years and are

naturally reproducing in Stony Brook. The students enjoyed this news and the day, while receiving fly-casting instructions by Dennis Johnson, and demos of WAV Stream Monitoring procedures by WAV monitors who are members of

the Friends of Stony Brook and Central Wisconsin TU's "River-keepers."

He explained that the water temperatures and dissolved oxygen were monitored weekly at seven locations along Stony Brook from May through October.

Cold water temperatures, even during last summer

Despite this exceptionally warm and dry summer, both attributes were within acceptable standards for trout survival. Angelo electro-shocked a mile upstream and half mile downstream and says the largest trout and most concentrated populations of trout were in the area of our stream improvements.

More than 3,000 brown and brook trout have been raised and planted by more than 1,000 students. These students have experienced an education that only TIC can provide. I call Stony Brook "The Students' Laboratory in the Field." This effort has shown them what a collaborated effort can do to restore our environment.

Approximately 1,000 feet of Stony Brook have been restored to a healthy trout stream. Once relatively straight, it now has a continuous meander with LUNKER structures and deflector logs at its many bends.

And it now has intermediate runs and riffles.

Culverts at an old field crossing were replaced, as were two other culverts in the past two years.


In May the Friends of Stony Brook will be starting and completing another 1,000 feet of stream restoration to continue transforming it from a "highway ditch" to a meandering coldwater stream. This improvement has been designed, permit approved and completely funded by the Fund For Lake Michigan, DNR, NRCS and landowners Tony and Teresa Hahn.

1,000 students exposed to trout, TU and conservation

TIC exposed 1,000 students to the rearing of trout, the negative impact we've had on the environment and the methods available to restore it. And all the while the students were exposed to TU's mission. I am sure some of the students and their parents will become TU members and support our efforts.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Friends of Stony Brook, please contact Joe Bach at 820-570-2632 or joebach1g@gmail.com.

—By Joe Bach, past president of the Fox Valley Chapter



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Updated decontamination guidance for New Zealand mudsnails

A recent study out of Michigan offers specific, and easy, guidance for how you can decontaminate your boots and waders when you're out fishing.

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

Loyal readers of *Wisconsin Trout* know about the threat New Zealand mudsnails (NZMS) pose to Wisconsin's trout streams. Since they first appeared in our state waters back in 2011, NZMS have continued their slow crawl to new water bodies, aided largely by unknowing anglers and paddlers accidentally moving them around on their boots, waders and canoes.

While the risks of spread and ecological impact remain, the good news is that a recent study out of Michigan offers specific, and easy, guidance for how you can decontaminate your boots and waders when you're out fishing, especially if you've visited one of the known infestation hot spots in the state.

In a 2022 study published in the journal *North American Fisheries Management*, Jeremy Geist and his coauthors determined that spraying gear with Formula 409 was 100 percent effective at killing mudsnails,

outperforming bleach and even Virkon Aquatic in lab trials. The paper also provided a detailed protocol outlining the steps.

How to limit new introductions to uninvaded streams and watersheds:

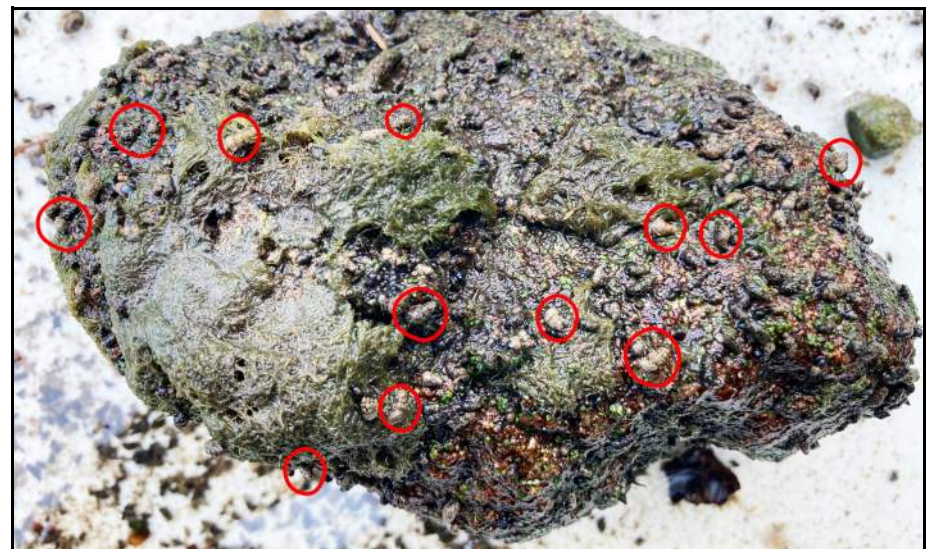
- If you've fished a known or suspected mudsnail-infested stream, please do the following:
- **LOOK:** Visually inspect wading and fishing gear and remove any snails you see.
- **BRUSH:** Use a stiff-bristled brush and/or wipe off organisms, debris, and organic material from your wading and fishing gear.
- **SPRAY:** With the angler positioned out of and away from surface waters, spray the wading and fishing gear liberally with Formula 409 (as prepared by the manufacturer), completely covering all material that was in contact with the water body.
- **WAIT:** Let Formula 409 remain on the fishing and wading gear



Bobbi Pekarsky

SNAILS AREN'T PICKY ABOUT WHERE THEY COLONIZE

Snails colonize any available surfaces, including this abandoned boot in Badger Mill Creek, Dane County.



Ellen Voss, River Alliance of Wisconsin

YOU HAVE TO LOOK CLOSE TO SEE THEM

New Zealand mudsnails can be hard to see, even if you're looking closely. Red circles indicate snails attached to this stream cobble.

- for at least 10 minutes.
- **RINSE:** With the angler positioned out of and away from surface waters, rinse the fishing and wading gear with clean water to remove residual Formula 409.

Remember that these snails are about the size of a grain of rice, so look carefully, especially under fabric flaps, in Velcro, boot grooves, and crevices. Formula 409 is less effective when mud is present. Direct contact with the chemical reagent is necessary for it to have maximum effectiveness, so remove as much mud as possible before spraying. A freshwater rinse will remove residual Formula 409 that could be harmful to native stream organisms. An old milk jug or spray bottle filled with tap water from your house works well for this step.

Currently known locations of mudsnails in Wisconsin, as of December, 2023:

- Vermont Creek, Dane County, 2023; tributary of Black Earth Creek
- Garfoot Creek, Dane County, 2023; tributary of Black Earth Creek
- Turtle Creek, border of Rock and Walworth counties, 2022; first known warmer-water fishery creek, though still a well-recreated state fishery area with good public accesses.
- Fries Feeder, Dane County, 2022; tributary to Mt. Vernon Creek

- Elvers Creek, Dane County, 2021
- Token Creek, Dane County, 2021
- Black Earth Creek
- Badger Mill Creek
- Badfish Creek
- Brewery Creek
- Strutt Creek
- Mt. Vernon Creek
- Rowan Creek

A key finding of the study was that these preventative measures only work if the protocols are followed correctly and anglers are willing to do them. It takes all of us working together to keep our trout streams as good as they can be, and a few minutes of decon at the end of your fishing adventure will do wonders for protecting our priceless streams.

To learn more, check out Geist et. al, 2022: Coupling Gear Decontamination Trials and Angler Surveys to Minimize Spread of Invasive New Zealand Mud Snails *Potamopyrgus antipodarum*

Coming soon: In collaboration with Rock River Coalition, efforts are underway to create a short, shareable video highlighting these easy steps for anglers.

Save the Date

Trout Fest²⁴

Saturday, February 17, 2024

Free Admission

Open 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Mt. Morris Camp & Conference Center • Wautoma, WI

5 Presentations

(Trout fishing, travel, photography & conservation)

10+ Demonstrating Fly Tyers

20+ Information Booths/Vendors

(Conservation projects, guides, artists, fly shops & more)

- Raffles
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- **LOTS** of Used Gear
- **LOTS** of Used Books
- Food & Drink on Site
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Visit cwtu.org for more info and details.

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Great Lakes Stream Restoration Update

By Chris Collier, Great Lakes Stream Restoration Manager

I think this is the first year since I moved to Wisconsin in 2019 where winter didn't come crashing in by early October. We had a little preview during Halloween, but then it was right back into the 60s and a prolonged fall.

However, as I sit and write this update, there's snow on the ground and a labrador under my desk keeping my feet warm. Winter is finally settling in, and with that comes time to reflect on another great year in the Northwoods and plan for exciting work just around the corner.

Year of firsts

2023 was a year of firsts for our still-young program, completing our first project in the Central Sands Region and our first fish-passage project in the Lake Superior basin, in the iconic Bois Brule watershed, no less.

Add these to our regularly scheduled programming in the northeast region and we completed six projects, reconnecting more than 18 miles of coldwater habitat and restoring approximately one mile.

This brings our completed projects total to 51, reconnecting or re-

storing more than 172 miles of trout streams.

Getting projects through construction wasn't the only work we focused on this past year. We also met with several TU chapters and other partners to help develop plans for future projects and large-scale watershed restoration.

The Wolf River Chapter took us on a tour of the Upper Wolf River watershed and showed us two projects, a culvert replacement, and a remnant dam removal that the chapter is interested in completing.

Our team also joined some members from the TU CARES partnership, Wisconsin DNR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for three separate project tours in the Central Sands Region, including a top-to-bottom watershed tour of the Mecan River.

The Wolf River and Central Sands tours are the first part of a larger effort to help build chapter capacity and find opportunities where our program can help.

Danielle and Emma stayed busy spring through fall leading our science, monitoring and other field-season efforts. Projects they worked on included brook trout movement studies at our restoration sites, installing EnviroDIY monitoring stations that provide real-time data,



Danielle Nelson

TEMP LOGGERS DEPLOYED ON THE WOLF RIVER WATERSHED
Emma Balliet retrieves data from temperature loggers deployed in the Upper Wolf River Watershed.

such as a U.S. Geological Survey stream gauge, supervising three seasonal interns and completing temperature monitoring work in the Upper Wolf River Watershed.

This work is helping to show how our projects are benefiting water quality and trout populations and keeping our streams cold.

Looking ahead

We have an action-packed 2024 planned. TU and our partners have at least nine crossing replacement projects planned that will reconnect more than 32 miles of coldwater habitat.

We're also continuing to provide design assistance on a couple of habitat restoration projects in the Central Sands that might be implemented in 2024.

Beyond the 2024 projects, Scott is hard at work designing five other projects for implementation in 2025 or 2026, and we will be surveying at

least three new project sites to add to that design list.

Danielle is already planning for spring and summer by getting seasonal hiring started, prioritizing field work and selecting sites for a new batch of EnviroDIY stations.

Emma is organizing three tree plantings with funding from Bell's Brewing, including one with the Friends of the North Pikes Creek Wetlands in Bayfield County, which will take place between May 10 and 12.

If you have any questions about projects or interest in seeing them in person, feel free to email me at chris.collier@tu.org. We would be excited to get you in the field.

I hope everyone is excited or at least ready to settle in behind the tying vise, get out on the ice or find other ways to enjoy winter. Before you know it, we'll be back in our favorite streams.

COLORS OF THE NORTHWOODS

Colors of the northwoods, brook trout collected while monitoring fish populations at a project site.



Chris Collier

NOT SURE ABOUT WINTER

The author's chocolate lab, Kota, debating if she enjoys winter as much as summer...or dinner.



Emma Balliet



Emma Balliet

FIELD WORK REQUIRES PLENTY OF CALORIES

2023 intern Dylan Wendricks showing that you can enjoy a fancy lunch during remote northeast Wisconsin field work.



Emma Balliet

DANIELLE NELSON SETS UP AN ENVIRODIY DEVICE
Danielle Nelson deploying an EnviroDIY stream monitoring device in the Middle Inlet system in northeast Wisconsin.

Got your Wisconsin TU license plates yet?

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





Chapter News

Aldo Leopold Chapter

Things are just starting to ramp up for the winter here at Aldo Leopold, as we have just started our third year of “Bar Flies,” our annual winter fly-tying gatherings, with locations in all three of our counties. This year we will be at AL Ringling Brewing in Baraboo, KD’s Bar & Grill in Lodi and Ooga Brewing in Beaver Dam. Chapter members should have received the newsletter with all of the dates and times.

Even if you are not a chapter member, feel free to join us. Dates are posted on our Facebook page and Instagram. Or you can email us at dtendres9@gmail.com and we’ll send you the dates and information.

We are also still doing our TU Brew coffee fundraiser, and 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 in 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. The one-pound bags are \$16, and a significant portion of that goes directly to our chapter. We will have delivery available to the State Council Banquet Feb. 3. If you would like to order some and pick it up there, please reach out to Dan Endres at dtendres9@gmail.com or call/text at 608-963-1374.

—Dan Endres

Antigo Chapter

We completed our fall brushing and painting projects. We were looking at the possibility of rebuilding the fishing platform at Highways 45 and Highway C at Lion’s Park. We removed some floor planks and found the framing and ground posts to be in good shape. We decided to continue the staining process for now.

We also cleaned out the waste line boxes that we’d placed at fishing access points, while adding 10 additional boxes.

We helped support a trip to the National TU Teen Summit in Montana for two of our chapter’s young

members, Harlon and Lauren.

In December we made our presentation at the Council’s Northeast Region meeting, where we heard from other chapters and from our DNR professionals, U.S. Forest Service staff and a representative from our TU Great Lakes team. It was great to hear all about work completed and upcoming projects. We reviewed the various funding requests and were proud to fill all \$46,600 of these requests.

We have started planning for our annual banquet, which is Saturday, March 23 at Northstar Lanes.

—Scott Henricks

Central Wisconsin Chapter

The chapter had its October board meeting at the Fin-n-Feather in Winneconne, where we were joined by Harlon Meade and Lauren Genske, both members of the Antigo Chapter. Harlon and Lauren were youth mentors at the WITU Youth Fishing Camp this summer and joined 15 other teens at the TU National Teen Summit in Lake George, Montana.

We enjoyed a fun program with them highlighting their time and what they learned at the Teen Summit. They also shared what is happening with the TU Youth Leadership Council and what the council is working on.

From there the month ended on a high note. Our chapter capped off a fantastic workday season with a fun event at the end of October. Chad Tucker, our workday chair, worked with the DNR’s Wautoma habitat crew for a training workday specifically for surveying brown trout redds (spawning nests) on the West Branch of the White River. We met at the DNR shop in Wild Rose for a brief classroom presentation about the surveying app, named Survey 123.

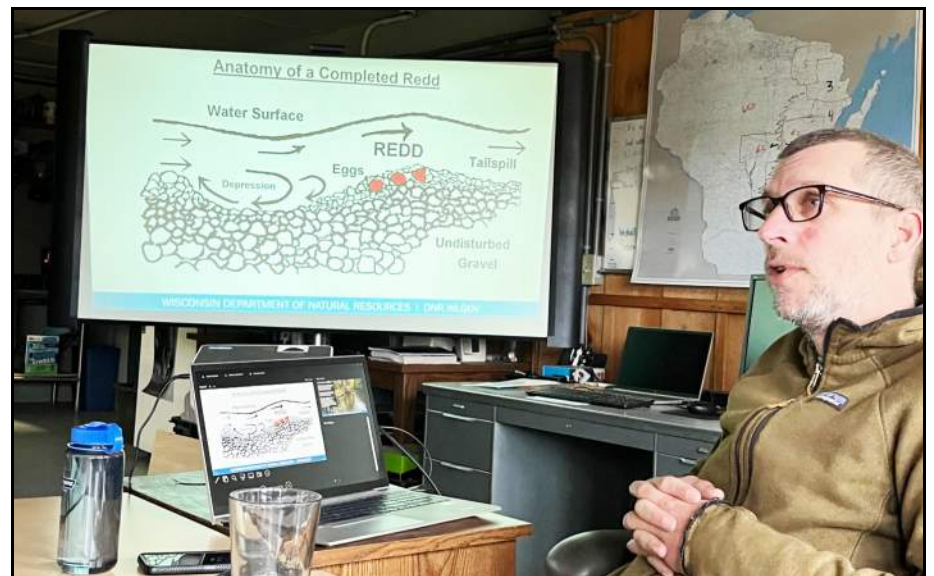
Then we headed to the West Branch of the White River for

hands-on training. The 15 people who attended had a great time and saw some beautiful fish using the redds. Please contact me if you are interested in the survey app for your chapter and I will put you in touch with the Wautoma DNR crew.

November was a quiet transition month. At our board meeting we filled some openings on our committees, then enjoyed a great program from Bob Haase, entitled “The Beauty of Nature Through the Eyes of a Photographer.” Bob shared wonderful photos of his travels around the Midwest and great stories about the pursuit of his best photos.

Steve Heuser has graciously taken on the role of webmaster and a Facebook facilitator. Check out the website at <https://centralwisconsin-tu.org/> or visit and follow our Facebook page. We will be working to keep these updated with news from the chapter.

Everyone’s invited to our big annual event, Troutfest. It’s a free event from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 17 at the Mt. Morris Convention Center in Mt. Morris. We have five great presentations scheduled throughout the day, along with vendors. And lunch is



LEARNING ABOUT REDDS BEFORE HEADING OUT INTO THE STREAM



REDDS NOT HARD TO SPOT...ONCE YOU KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR



SUBTLE, YET OBVIOUS, TROUT REDD ON THE WEST BRANCH WHITE RIVER

available if you’d like. A highlight will be a rummage table with items such as fly-tying supplies and fishing equipment, all donated by chapter members.

Our chapter banquet is Saturday, Oct. 19 at the Premier Best Western

in Oshkosh. Watch for more exciting news about the banquet in our newsletter, or on our website and Facebook page.

—Linn Beck

Coulee Region Chapter

The Coulee Region Chapter (CRTU) is happy to report that through the generous support of the membership it has had an eventful season of member and community engagement. Thank you to our CRTU members, the board members and the tireless volunteers who make these activities happen.

As a major participant in Trout-Fest at Coon Valley, the chapter provided gear and bait for more than 100 young anglers to experience the joy of catching a fish with the help of CRTU volunteers.

For the third year, the chapter hosted 12 girls for our STREAM Girls event. The STEM-based curriculum is packed into one amazing

day in August to showcase science, biology and fishing. The partnership with the Girl Scouts extends the impact of the activity far beyond our local community. Thank you to all the volunteers and our chief volunteer-wrangler, Brad Berger.

The chapter’s biggest fundraiser is our annual banquet in February. It will be held at the Cedar Creek Country Club in Onalaska on February 23. Information on dinner tickets and donations is at <https://www.couleeregiontu.org/banquet>. Contact Deb Muresan at debmuresan@gmail.com or Curt Rees at curtrees@gmail.com for more information. Please consider joining us for the fun.

Chad Tucker

Chad Tucker

Chad Tucker

Chapter News



Deb Muresan

TEACHING STREAMGIRLS HOW TO TIE THEIR FIRST FLY

Coulee Region Chapter volunteers helped the girls get the hang of tying their first fly - the wooly bugger - at StreamGirls day.



Jason Freund

STREAMGIRLS HUNT FOR BUGS IN THE KICKAPOO RIVER

Conservation and habitat improvement projects have continued to move along. The success of the Council's Watershed Access Fund and its partnership with CRTU and other conservancy groups to acquire a parcel on the Kickapoo River is a shining example of how things can work. The chapter's financial support of the fishing habitat improvements on the Bostwick Creek watershed was another example of a productive way to use funds raised in support of habitat restoration (Fishing habitat improvements are not funded by the county, nor are they part of the core project.) CRTU is making plans to engage in additional work on the Bostwick Creek watershed and several other creeks and streams of our six-county area.

Membership meetings resumed in September, which featured local guide Erik Helm providing fall Driftless Area fishing tips.

The October meeting focused on a conservation project in La Crosse County on the Bostwick Creek watershed. Jake Schweitzer of the La Crosse County Conservation Department shared the County's completed and continuing work on the watershed.

November brought us Ethics

Night on the UW-La Crosse campus. The Freshwater Ecology and Management Club talked about their upcoming winter mortality study and effects of handling fish in cold and/or snowy conditions. In addition, Rick Kyte presented an interactive discussion of the ethics of angling.

December was an opportunity to get together, socialize and finish out the year at the annual holiday party. We didn't have a program, so it was a great chance to informally chat and visit with other members.

The Annual Meeting of the chapter will be part of the January 2024 meeting. UW-La Crosse graduate student Brandon Thill will share research findings on brook trout in the Driftless Area, along with some snorkel techniques.

The chapter would like to express their sincere appreciation to Brad Bryan who has until recently served as the chapter secretary and kept everyone up-to-date through his chapter reports to *Wisconsin Trout*. We appreciate his time and effort handling these responsibilities. And thank you to all the supporters of CRTU for your financial donations and volunteer support.

—Deb Muresan

Fox Valley Chapter

The board of the Fox Valley Chapter has been busy the last three months planning a number of projects.

The most important project is our upcoming annual Cabin Fever Day. Although the closing of our long-time venue created some last-minute scrambling, we're proud to have found an even better location, thanks to the leadership of new organizer Doug Nelson. And it's an organization with similar conservation interests to TU.

This year Cabin Fever Day will be at the Bubolz Nature Center on County Highway A, near Interstate

41. We will again have dinner catered by Van Abel's, which is recognized as having some of the best food in the Valley. The event will again have the excellent bucket raffles, a silent auction and great speakers on fishing opportunities in and near our state.

Tickets are only available on line at our website at <https://foxvalley-tu.org/>. Please join us and meet people who care about our coldwater resources and are willing to share information about trout fishing experiences.

About 60 people joined us in October for a 50th anniversary event,

where we heard messages from an original chapter founder, John Hammond. The highlighted speaker of the evening was Wisconsin Council Chair Scott Allen. Many of our members came out to enjoy a chance to tell stories of past fishing experiences and reunite with old friends. The committee of Bruce Pennings, Dave Coenen, Don Clouthier, Jerome Herro and Jason Bougie did a great job organizing the event.

Also in January is the 8th Annual Central Regional Meeting of DNR Fisheries and Habitat Restoration. Our own Tom Lager organizes this meeting and brings together people from the DNR and other agencies

that can help with projects to improve the coldwater resources in the Central Sands Area.

One of the purposes of the meeting is to determine the costs of supporting Limited Term Employees to work on trout management projects in central Wisconsin. This meeting organizes the efforts of all the chapters in TU CARES, of which Tom has been a longtime organizer.

Our chapter is also working toward securing funds for projects through the legacies of our dedicated members. Al Johnson, Norm Christnacht and John Barkmeier put together a pamphlet identifying opportunities for tax-free donations toward coldwater resources. We



SCOTT ALLEN VISITED FVTU TO CELEBRATE ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

hope their efforts will result in more funds for future habitat projects.

—Tony Pudlo

Frank Hornberg Chapter

As I look back on 2023, I am grateful for all the people who helped our chapter in various ways. Your commitment to Trout Unlimited is a testament to how important coldwater fisheries are to you.

Our final workday of the year was on the Tomorrow River at Bucholtz Road. We removed some trees that were blocking the creek and brushed the stream for fishability. Afterwards we grilled brats and burgers at Central Waters Brewing Co. and enjoyed some great microbrews.

In November Wisconsin Fisheries Biologist Lucas Koenig, along with Jason Spaeth, updated us on the most recent shocking efforts in Portage County. I left that presentation thinking about new streams I should try in 2024.

The Wisconsin River Valley Chapter will once again be hosting

the International Flyfishing Film Tour (IFFT) on Wednesday, Feb. 7 at the UW-SP Wausau Center for Civic Engagement Theater. If you have never attended an IFFT event, it is an experience not to be missed. Food, drinks and great raffle prizes are also available at the event. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. and the film starts at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$20 at the door. Come out and support our neighboring chapter.

At the IFFT we will be raffling a Charlie Preston net. This net is made in Friendship, Wisconsin from Birdseye maple, mahogany and black walnut. Tickets will be \$5 each or three for \$10.

We are always looking for people who can support our chapter by participating in our activities. Make this the year that you help our chapter grow.

—Doug Erdmann

Green Bay Chapter

Green Bay Trout Unlimited (GBTU) held one work project since our last report. In October 11 members helped install the final wave of signs on our Trout Tails Educational Trail along Haller Creek in Brown County. We rented a power post-hole digger to make us more efficient, and it was totally worth it. By the time the dust settled, the final eight signs were firmly in place. The trail now features 14 high-quality educational signs that should be around for many years. This marked the end of a three-year project to remove and replace our old trail.

This is also the time of year we kick off our meeting schedule. In September our board of directors met to create a draft budget. In October we presented the budget to our membership for approval. At

our October meeting we were also joined by guest speaker Jonathan Pyatskowitz who gave a presentation titled "Wood and Water – Habitat Management in Northeast Wisconsin Trout Streams." It was very well received.

For our November meeting we welcomed TU Great Lakes Stream Restoration's (TU GLSR) Chris Collier and Danielle Nelson. They shared the TU GLSR Program Update. It was wonderful to hear about the great work they are doing in the Northwoods and beyond.

In December GBTU, several other northeast Wisconsin chapters, the DNR, TU GLSR and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) met virtually for our annual WITU Northeast Region meeting. Region Chair Dale Lange hosted the gathering.



Chapter News



GREEN BAY CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS AT HALLER CREEK WORKDAY

The DNR, TU GLSR and USFS bring funding requests to the table. All the requests either directly or indirectly benefit trout. TU chapters then attempt to pool our resources in a way to provide funding. The combined requests this year were for \$46,600 and our northeast chapters proudly committed full funding.

Finally, GBTU continues to run our Veteran's Service Program. They are held at Tight Lines Fly Shop in De Pere every other Mon-

day 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.

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

—Adrian Meseberg

Harry & Laura Nohr Chapter

We submitted our DNR Surface Water Grant application for the Straka property on the upper Blue River and have submitted the payment request on our DNR grant for Big Spring Creek.

We are still working on getting permits for the Snowbottom area off Bowers Road. Since it is state property, NRCS is not involved, so TUDARE's Paul Krahn will do the design and permits. All required paperwork has been submitted.

We finished and sent out a final report for the Big Spring 2022-3 project. This will be available on our web page.

We have a Lie and Tie set for Jan. 20 at Stonefield Apartments in Dodgeville, where we will have a talk by Phil Anderson about the origins of tying, tie some flies for our fly box for the state TU banquet and share techniques and stories.

The Grant County Outdoor Skills Day is set for Feb. 3 at SWTC in the auto repair building, as in the past. Our members will teach fly tying and casting.

We're working on a design for

signs that we can place on the stiles we install, which will explain our contribution and include a QR code that leads to our website.

Our Fennimore Trout In the Classroom has received its trout eggs and is up and running.

A student writer for the Natural Resource Institute through UW-Madison Extension, Chloe Maridel Hansen, filmed and interviewed one of Nohr's Water Action Volunteer (WAV) teams in October. The footage will be used to show the process of monitoring by volunteers and to get their perspective on what stream monitoring means to them. The team of Bill Wisler, Paul Manley (and dog Fritz) and Cara Knothe demonstrated the steps involved in monitoring a stream.

Many volunteers monitor streams on their own land or on streams that have special meaning to them. The water quality data collected and recorded through the years provides important elements useful for decision making and natural resource management. If you are interested in becoming involved,



STREAM MONITORING FOR THE WAV PROGRAM

Nohr Chapter WAV volunteer Bill Wisler and UW Extension's Chloe Maridel Hanson examine macroinvertebrate stream samples.

visit the WAV site at <https://wateractionvolunteers.org>.

—Brian Larson

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter

In September we kicked off our fall meeting schedule with an Open House and Gear Swap at Rush River Brewing in River Falls. This event featured a farmers market, food and music, along with a gear swap and sale. We had very good attendance and even saw some new faces.

Eight of our volunteers helped at the Pheasants Forever Youth Game Fair in September. Nearly 40 kids participated in Kiap TU Wish activities, which included fly tying, casting instruction and fishing on the lake. No fish were landed but one individual had some real excitement when a large northern pike grabbed hold of the sunfish which he was attempting to land.

Each student received six flies tied by Bob Trevis, which were a big hit. Each student participating was registered for a chance to win a fly-fishing outfit. Gavin Jennings was the winner. Volunteers participating were Greg Olson, Ted Hanna, Tim

Petersen, Brock Flowers, Randy Arnold, Brent O'Hara, Jeff Himes, Dan Donahue and Tom Schnadt.

Kiap TU Wish Chapter Board members Linda Radimecky and Michele Bevis helped teach and guide 13 women at the Casting for Recovery Retreat in September at White-water State Park in southeast Minnesota. Casting for Recovery provides healing retreats for women with breast cancer. They had a great time with the students. Kiap TU Wish was pleased to provide a donation allowing for two of the women to participate.

On October 3 Josh Boeser, a professional snowboarder, fly-fishing guide and instructor based out of Minneapolis, gave a talk about spey casting and fishing for steelhead and smallmouth bass. There was good attendance and much interest in learning this technique.

"Kinnickinnic Watershed Protection" was the topic of conversation



NOHR CHAPTER FINISHES UP WORK ON BIG SPRING CREEK

The Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter's final report on its Big Spring 2022-23 project is now available on its website.



KIAP TU WISH CHAPTER SUPPORTS CASTING FOR RECOVERY

Casting For Recovery Instructor and Kiap Board Member Linda Radimecky (right) helps teach fly casting.

Chapter News



KIAP VOLUNTEERS FOUND NEW FRIENDS AT CASTING FOR RECOVERY
Casting For Recovery Instructor and Kiap Board Member Michele Bevis (right) with a Casting For Recovery participant.

at our November chapter meeting. Tim Stieber and Josh O'Neil talked about Kinnickinnic watershed improvement, past and present.

Tim stated that good water quality doesn't just happen. It takes attention to land-use practices that are occurring in the landscape and working to improve them. Tim reviewed St. Croix County Land and Water Conservation investments over the past 22 years. Practices such as waterways, stream bank improvements and nutrient management plans were implemented and have helped protect the river.

Josh O'Neil, a conservation planner, gave a talk on a successful streambank stabilization and habitat improvement project that he implemented on the Kinni.

A recommended six-month moratorium on Pierce County CAFOs was reversed at the July Pierce County Land Use Committee meeting. One of the agenda items was to agree on wording of the moratorium to send to the county board for a vote. However, a board member flipped his vote making it 3-2 against the moratorium, so the moratorium is now dead and will not reach the county board.

This is an unfortunate turn of events. As part of this reversal, the county proposed the establishment of a Groundwater Advisory Committee. We were pleased that Kiap TU Wish Chapter Board Member Rainbow Barry was appointed to this committee. Congrats, Rainbow.

Kiap-TU-Wish is sponsoring three classrooms for Trout In the

Classroom this school year: Ellsworth Elementary, Prescott Intermediate School and River Falls Public Montessori Elementary. Eyed eggs arrived from the St. Croix Falls State Fish Hatchery in late November.

The brown trout alevin began pushing out of their eggs shortly after that. They are now slowly digesting their egg sacs, huddled together in the bottom of the nesting baskets. Students are watching closely for the first "swim-ups" indicating the trout have fully digested their egg sacs and it is time to provide the first pinch of food. Meanwhile students are researching the trout life cycle and learning how to conduct water quality tests.

The chapter held six workdays since the end of the inland trout season. Four of the workdays involved cutting box elder, buckthorn and honeysuckle at a DNR easement on the Kinni just upstream of the Hwy 35/65 bridge in River Falls.

This was in preparation for the Greenwood Elementary 4th grade class to assist us with burning all of the slash in December. About 75 students, 10 chaperones and the teachers turned out, along with 12-chapter volunteers, to assist with the burn. DARE media specialist Peter Jonas was on hand as well to videotape the event.

We also began clearing similar woody vegetation from another stretch of the Kinni about two miles upstream and expect to be working there for a number of weekends. Chapter Habitat Coordinator Ran-

dy Arnold met up with Kasey Yallaly in September and identified a list of optional easements on the Kinni which need serious brushing work.

Members of the chapter maintenance committee, Tom Schnadt, Scott Wagner, Missey Hanson and Randy Arnold, met with Kasey and Nate Anderson at the DNR center in Baldwin to discuss past and future project work, summer mowing and winter brushing.

This same group met in December with Pierce County Soil and Water Conservation Manager Rod Webb to discuss project work in his district. Planned restoration proj-

ects for Nate Anderson's crew for next summer season include finishing up the stretch of Parker Creek downstream of Pleasant Avenue, which was begun last year.

Also in the works is the Moody easement on the Kinni. This single-bank easement is just downstream of the Main Street bridge. The final project for next season is a stretch of Plum Creek, on the Martin easement, just upstream of the Von Holtum easement, where we completed restoration work three summers ago.

On December 5 we hosted our annual Kiap TU Wish Holiday Ban-



TIRED YOUNG WORK CREW FROM GREENWOOD ELEMENTARY
The Greenwood Elementary 4th grade class assisted Kiap TU Wish volunteers with burning slash in December. About 75 students, 10 chaperones and the teachers turned out, along with 12 chapter volunteers. DARE media specialist Peter Jonas was also there and filmed the event.

quet, featuring chapter awards, white elephant gift exchange, ugly holiday-sweater contest and a fly

swap. We had strong attendance, and it was an enjoyable event.

—Gary Horvath

Lakeshore Chapter

It has been a relatively quiet fall for Lakeshore. Our October workday was cancelled due to nasty weather. November saw many of us in the woods hunting so as usual we didn't have a November workday. We were back at it in December doing land work in the Onion River Public Fishing Area south of Plymouth. We had 12 hearty souls turn out on a blustery day building access lanes for the DNR equipment that will be employed over the winter to place gravel and topsoil on top of the LUNKER structures that we repaired during the summer. We also are working on creating angler trails that are set back from the river's edge to protect the structures and improve bank integrity.

Lakeshore continues to support TIC programs in Plymouth, Random Lake, Sheboygan and Fond du

Lac. We are also engaged in conversations about mill pond dam removals in Cascade and Waldo. These communities, along with the city of Plymouth, are facing impending DNR-imposed actions related to mill pond dams on Nichols Creek, the Onion River and Mullet Creek, respectively.

We held our year-end celebration in December, recognizing individual club members and sponsors for outstanding contributions to our chapter. We shared a catered meal from Three men and a Grill and enjoyed the raffles and silent auction. We'll reveal award winners in the next chapter report.

We look forward to seeing our TU friends at the State Council banquet Feb. 3 in Oshkosh.

—Al Wortz

Oconto River Watershed Chapter

In August several TU groups gathered to remove brush and improve fishability and water flow on the North Branch Beaver Creek Fishery area near the DNR parking area off the northeast corner of West 20th Road near Crivitz. The area has a good population of trout.

With DNR staff leading the way, we split into two groups to work on areas north and south of the parking area. According to the DNR's Jonathan Pyatskowitz, "The workday was a success. We successfully brushed 3,250 feet of stream for fishability and improved flow. In addition, stream-side trail access was improved over much of the site. Future plans include scouting upstream near Walker Creek to see if that would be feasible for a workday next

year. We're very happy with the work we accomplished. Having a big crew means we can cover some ground. Thanks again for working with us and we look forward to working with TU in the future."

Of the 24-volunteer crew, there were seven from the Oconto River Chapter, including Ted Schaff, Mike Schlumpf, Devin Blom, Tom Klatt, Wayne Czipinski, Patrick Klatt and his son, Henry.

Chapter members participated in all four TU/DNR monthly stream projects this summer. The other three sites were the South Fork Thunder River, Wausaukee River and Evergreen Creek. The Green Bay TU Chapter is the lead coordinator for Saturday Stream projects.

The Northern Oconto County



THE STRONG...THE PROUD...THE KIAP TU WISH VOLUNTEER CREW
Greenwood Elementary service-learning day volunteers, from left: Marty Engel, Tom Schnadt, Mark Peerenboom, Jim Sauter, Dave Kozlovsky, Oat Sexton, Jim Tatzel, Dave Gregg and Tom Anderson.



Chapter News

Trout Alliance (NOTCA) has completed its eighth year of raising trout at the Old Lakewood Fish Hatchery. The alliance raised 24,500 brown and brook trout during the 2023 season. About 36 volunteers fed the fish every morning and evening, cleaned the fish tanks twice weekly and gave tours every Saturday from late June through November 1. This year visitor attendance was the most ever recorded, with more than 500 people touring the hatchery operation.

During the last week in October, the DNR placed 15,000 brown trout in the Wolf River at County Highway A and River Road in Langlade County. About 8,000 brown trout were planted in the Oconto River at Pulcifer Park in Shawano County.

About 1,500 brook trout were planted in Remington Pond, a fully-accessible fishing area in Antigo. The fish were an average size of eight inches. Since NOCTA'S inception in 2015, with only volunteer help, and through fundraising and donations for fish food costs, it has raised more than 165,000 brook trout and brown trout and stocked them in Oconto and Langlade county streams. The alliance hopes to continue this work again next year. The Oconto River Chapter is financial supporter of NOCTA.

In early October we were invited to help teach students from Gillett High School how to cast a fly rod. The opportunity arose as part of an

outdoors class taught by Jill Halla. The class included a unit on fishing. Students were taught basics on different styles of fishing including spinning, baitcasting, flyfishing and various knot tying. About 20 students participated in the casting demonstrations out on the football field. Chapter members including Wayne Czapinski, Lyman Wocking, David Kalous and Dale Halla, used the chapter's fly rods to teach the basics of fly casting. Surprisingly, there were only two or three of the students who had ever fished with a fly rod. Several students had never fished. That was about to change.

On October 9 the students took a field trip to Lyman's Pond. This would be their opportunity to practice what they were taught. The class was split into groups and spread out around the five-acre lake. One side was reserved for those new fly anglers to test their skills. The groups switched sides every 20 minutes, allowing students ample opportunities to catch something. Each fish caught was logged and released. One corner of the pond had a population of rainbow trout which were eager biters.

Thanks to our mentors, included Lyman and Cathy Wocking, Gary and Helen Lisowe, Dan Sumnicht, Bill Wagner, Wayne Czapinski, Tom Klatt, Bruce Kitzman, Dave Kalous, Jeff Zaring, Mike Kaczmarek and Dale Halla. They all helped make this event a success.

—Tom Klatt

Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter

SEWTU fall chapter activities kicked off with the September screening of the IF4 Fly Fishing Film Festival at the Bavarian Bier Haus in Glendale. About 150 folks enjoyed this screening of a series of short, high-quality fly-fishing films from around the world. Attendees also enjoyed an opportunity to participate in a number of high-quality bucket raffles featuring fly rod and reel packages, guided trips, fine wine and spirits, along with the return of the very popular kayak grand door prize. The event provided great exposure for both TU and our local chapter.

The chapter's habitat workdays continued with a September return to our Scuppernong Springs project to continue the installation of log structures, biologists and woody backfill. This environmentally sensitive area not only requires hand work with minimal use of power equipment but also requires careful attention due to the presence of rare and endangered native plants. This required some additional education as to what shouldn't be stepped on

while we worked on the stream. Our 20 SEWTU volunteers passed that test. Bratwurst tastes better when you get a lot done.

Our friends from the Oakbrook Chapter joined us in October for a return to Karcher Creek in western Racine County to complete biolog installation and brushing. Our partnership with Oakbrook has greatly helped in the ongoing restoration of what is perhaps the southernmost trout stream in our area. The 17 volunteers accomplished a great deal and later enjoyed a brat fry and some good trout talk while relaxing afterwards.

October also featured our chapter meeting featuring our own John Graba, who provided a travelogue of his recent fly-fishing trip to Argentina. Slides of volcano-topped mountains, broad rivers, pristine lakes and massive trout kept us riveted. If that wasn't enough, John tantalized those in attendance with examples of over-the-top gourmet dining and hospitality. On the practical side, John's presentation also provided us with useful travel tips



SEWTU VOLUNTEERS PLACED BIOLOGS ALONG KARCHER CREEK

and suggestions for easy international travel.

We all hope he finds another exotic location so he can come back and give the membership another presentation.

Author John Van Vliet visited us for our November meeting with an outstanding presentation of his new book "Trout Fishing in Southwest Wisconsin." John is the author of more than a dozen fly fishing books and has written for publications ranging from the New York Times to Fly Fisherman. After a very informative presentation, John took some questions and signed quite a few of his books.

Community activities included SEWTU volunteers participating at the Fish and Feather Festival at Hubbard Park in Shorewood on the Milwaukee River in October. The festival, which coincides with the fall

salmon run, gave SEWTU volunteers a chance to interact with the community and provide education about fishing, conservation and TU's role in coldwater conservation. We also gave away a few flies and some candy for the kids, and we taught a little fly-casting. The next October weekend saw SEWTU volunteers doing similar community outreach at the DNR steelhead facility on the Root River in Racine. Way to go, volunteers.

The work trailer has been winterized, along with the chainsaws and brush cutters. December featured our Holiday Party, with a food drive, raffles, volunteer recognition prizes, a gift exchange and some holiday cheer. As for the chapter gift exchange, I got everybody socks. Or fruitcake.

—Rick Larkin

Southern Wisconsin Chapter

It was a very fishy fall for SWTU. Our last few monthly chapter meetings have been an inspiring delight of picture-filled presentations of far-off fishing adventures. Dale Osthoff had us all calculating driving distances and thinking about hiking poles with his talk on alpine lake fishing and how to catch the most beautiful fish in the world.

We were also treated to Kyle Zempel sharing a warm southern adventure of fishing for red drum on the Louisiana bayou. We look forward to 2024, as we have a great lineup of exciting and educational presenters regarding waters near and far.

Earlier in fall Justin Haglund, DNR fish biologist for Iowa and Richland counties, discussed a plan to protect brook trout on Melancthon Creek. It is one of the most important brookie streams in our part of the Driftless Area because the

fish have genetics native to the lower Wisconsin River drainage. That makes them an important source of fish for the DNR's wild trout management program, as the DNR utilizes native eggs to provide for and maintain brook trout populations across the Driftless Area.

At Melancthon, though, the invasive brown trout have started to take over and Justin needed our help. This led to a unique volunteer opportunity that many in our chapter leapt to help with.

We would work alongside DNR crews as they shocked Melancthon and netted brown trout to be moved to Pine Creek. It was a tremendous amount of work over four days – exhausting but exhilarating. We electroshocked the browns and transported them to the processing area, tagged them and released them into the Pine River. Some of the work was obviously hard, such as



SEWTU'S KARCHER CREEK WORK CREW



SWTU HELPS MOVE BROWN TROUT FROM BROOK TROUT STREAM

SWTU volunteers assisted the DNR in netting, measuring, tagging and moving brown trout in Melancthon Creek to help the brook trout population.

Chapter News



THEY WEREN'T ALL THIS SMALL

SWTU volunteers assisted the DNR in netting, measuring, tagging and moving brown trout in Melancthon Creek to help the brook trout population.



MANY HANDS...AND A SKIDSTEER...MAKE LIGHT WORK

The Southern Wisconsin Chapter's stream team got a great hand from the landowner while working along Kittleson Creek during a recent work day.

wading and shocking fish. Some was tougher than imagined, such as bending over a table and clipping squirming trout for five hours. The DNR crews were so professional in handling fish and accurately recording data. We learned from the best.

Overall, we tagged 1,000 brown trout over six inches and removed another 2,112 under 6 inches for a grand total of 3,112. Check out the Wisconsin TU Instagram page for a great video of this project from Mike Kuhr.

In addition, Jim Hess arranged effective and efficient stream workdays on key local waters, including the Sugar River, Big Spring, Hefty, Whitford and Kittleson creeks. Invasive plant species were cut and in some cases stacked to burn, and in

others used to create brush bundles that were anchored into the creek to narrow the channel and build up the bank over time. Some of the bundles done in past years are proving how tremendously effective this process can be. Thank you to Jim and our many members and other partners who helped to make these days safe, fun and meaningful.

Apart from engaging stream work and meetings, we're excited to once again offer free fly-tying classes to our members. These will begin in January with one class for beginners and another for those who are more experienced.

As always, we have much more going on. Visit swtu.org to learn all about it.

—Drew Kasel

Wild Rivers Chapter

We wrapped up our 2023 calendar and have begun planning for 2024. We'll have an activity or event nearly every month for members to engage in. We're looking forward to continued partnerships with our local partner groups, as well as the DNR, U.S. Forest Service, National Parks Service, TU Great Lakes staff, Red Cliff Fisheries Depart-

ment, Iron River National Fish Hatchery and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We are very pleased to have such strong and meaningful relationships and to be able to contribute to the larger cold-water resource efforts here in Northwest Wisconsin.

—Kevin Seefeldt

Wisconsin River Valley Chapter

I hope your holidays were wonderful.

The trout eggs have arrived to our TIC tank at Maple Grove Elementary in Athens. Perry Nikolai, Kirk Stark and Al Hauber visited the class to answer questions about baby trout.

Bull Falls Harley Davidson presented a check to Pat Esselman and Kirk Stark for \$1,500. Many thanks to Pat Esselman for all his efforts organizing The Wild Rose Hatchery Watershed Ride with Bull Falls Harley Davidson. And thanks to Perry Nikolai for flipping burgers.



Dyan Lesnik

WRVC'S TROUT EGGS HAVE ARRIVED AND THE KIDS ARE EXCITED

The trout eggs have arrived at the TIC tank at Maple Grove Elementary in Athens. The Wisconsin River Valley Chapter's Perry Nikolai, Kirk Stark and Al Hauber visited the class to answer questions about baby trout.

Our fall Chapter Kick Off with Pizza was held at the Sawmill Brewery in Merrill. The weather was a bit nippy for eating al fresco, but the pizza was delicious. Thank you to everyone who attended.

In October we held our annual Plover River Stream study with the biology, chemistry and physics students from Wausau East High School. This is always great fun as we work with some bright young kids and check out the critters that live in a trout stream. Thank you to Al Hauber for all the information you were able to share on the rehab work and history of the Plover River. Thank you, Perry Nikolai and Kirk Stark, for your help with identifying insects. Thank you to Bruce Matta and your students for a fun day playing in the water.

Also in October we gathered at the Wausau Mine Company to hear Johnson Bridgewater's presentation "Proposed Sulfide Mining in Taylor and Marathon Counties." He is the water advocates organizer for the River Alliance of Wisconsin. He shared with us information on three sites.

There has not been any activity with The Reef site on the Eau Claire River in Marathon County since late 2022. Green Light Metals, a Canadian company based in Toronto, had sent a request to the DNR for permission to do exploration drilling. The DNR responded with a list of questions and requirements, but Green Light Metals has not yet responded. The Reef deposit is on private land. Most contaminants from a mine site are spread when they enter a river.

The Bend Deposit in Taylor County on the north branch of the Yellow River is in the Chequamegon National Forest about 35 miles southeast of Ladysmith. Green Light Metals submitted a Notice of Intent with the DNR in April 2023. This met the DNR requirements, and a permit was issued. But because the Bend Deposit

is in the National Forest, the final approvals need to come from the U.S. Forest Service.

All sulfide mining is unsafe. Metals like copper, nickel and zinc are naturally bound to sulfur in rock. When it is exposed to water and air it becomes an acid that contaminates water and releases toxic chemicals into the environment.

Some lawmakers only mention the jobs that mines will create, but those jobs are short lived and workers are sometimes brought from outside of the area and are special skilled workers. Green Light Metals is based in Canada, so the profits of a mining venture do not stay in the state. Wild rice fields that are vital to the indigenous tribes would also be in peril. Every living thing depends on water, and it needs to be protected.

For more mining information or to be added to the contact list, please visit www.wisconsinrivers.org. Thank you to Johnson Bridgewater and to all who attended this presentation.

In November we gathered at the Sawmill Brewery for a presentation by WAOW Meteorologist Justin Loew entitled "Fishing, Weather and Climate." Thank you, Justin, for spending some time talking with us. And thank you to all who attended.

In December Dallas Moe presented "Spin Fishing for Trout-More Than Child's Play." I have seen the work that Dallas and his fishing buddy, Mike Starry, put into the annual youth fishing camp and I am always taking notes. Hackle and Hops, Open Fly & Jig Tying at Sawmill Brewery, was also in December.

February 7 is the return of the the International Fly-Fishing Film Festival. Tickets are available at <https://www.flyfilmfest.com>. Tickets are \$15 online and \$20 the day of the show. Watch your email for more information. We hope to see you there.

—Linda Lehman

Wolf River Chapter

Happy New Year. The Wolf River Chapter needs your help opposing Langlade County Resolution #39-2022, which affects the type of use on the Wolf River State Trail from Hwy 64 north to Lily in Langlade County.

The trail is currently a non-mo-

torized summer trail, and along the Wolf River on the old railroad grade. A little less than halfway up the trail, the railroad grade trail crosses the Wolf River on a beautiful old railroad trestle close to where Nine Mile Creek, which also has a trestle, enters the Wolf River.



Chapter News

All along this section of river are small, cold springwater streams, creeks and seeps that help to maintain the temperatures needed for trout habitat. Many are also native trout spawning and habitat sites. This area is also a prime nesting area for threatened wood turtles and other turtles that live in the area.

At this time, this portion of the Wolf River Trail is a quiet sports trail, shared by hikers, mountain bikers and horseback trail riders. The Wolf River is enjoyed by canoeists, kayakers, rafters, tubers and most importantly, fisherman who hike in to fish the river. The economic impact of fishing is seemingly being ignored by Langlade County. All are quiet or silent sports that

gently use the surrounding area.

There are currently ADA passes and gate keys that have been given out to disabled ATV/UTV so they can access hunting and fishing in this area. However, it seems there are some who have keys who are using the trails for personal use and joy riding.

Langlade County claims that the Forestry, Parks and Recreation Department, in a letter to the DNR, has received a total of 198 letters in support of opening the entire Wolf River State Trail to all recreational uses including summer motorized recreational travel. They also claim there has been minimal opposition to this request. If ATV/UTV usage is allowed on this trail section, the

quality of experience on this section of the Wolf River will be significantly reduced due to noise, exhaust smell, dust and potential destruction of springs. Langlade County's answer to the turtle question is to fence the trail to prevent the turtles from nesting in the area.

Many current users of the trail will likely stop using the trail and will no longer be spending money at area businesses. Mountain bikes and horses cannot safely share trails with ATVs. Many people fish this area for its remoteness and solitude, not to choke on the dust from ATVs racing along the river. The Wolf River Fishery is a unique area in Langlade County that needs to be protected from overuse and the ad-

verse effect ATV/UTVs would have.

If you'd like to help, send an email opposing Langlade County Resolution #39-2022 and use of the trail by ATV/UTV to amurray@co.langlade.wi.us. If you happen to be a Langlade County property owner or resident, please mention it. However, all trail users need to be heard from. It would also help if you could email the following people at the DNR: JamesA.Yach@wisconsin.gov, douglas.duke@wisconsin.gov, Alan.Niebur@wisconsin.gov and Paul.Cunningham@wisconsin.gov.

—Laurie Zen Netzow

Wading safety

Situational awareness, boot sole choices, wading staffs, physical fitness and common sense all play a role in keeping you upright...and alive.

By Jonathan Jacobs

"Nothing cuts into your fishing time like death." —A.K. Best, quoted by John Gierach

After learning in a July email from Michael Alwin of a wading misadventure, which he eventually wrote about in the August 2023 article titled "The Grim Reaper as Your Guide,"

Mike has been invaluable to me as both a mentor and friend over the years and thinking about his near drowning was mortifying to me. I did respond to his email with some suggestions on wading safety and I'd like to share them with you and expand a bit on them as well.

The first consideration in wading safely is constant situational awareness. You should ask yourself this question frequently: What happens if this doesn't go well? This may make you rethink your approach and develop a new plan, or you may have no choice but to proceed, but at least asking and answering this question will force you to look for contingencies.

This link (<https://howtofly-fish.orvis.com/how-to-articles/trout-fishing-articles/tips-for-safe-wading>) to the Orvis Learning Center, which Michael included in his article, provides excellent advice on instream wading.

Since I can't improve on it, I'll stress only two points regarding technique.

First, one of the most common mistakes that I've made and have seen others make is trying to wade while casting. This is an invitation to disaster. You're striding along, watching to see if a fish will rise again, when you trip on an unseen rock, stick or sudden depression in the bottom and plunge forward in a desperate but futile effort to regain your footing.

The second thing I've seen, and to my misfortune have done myself, is stepping backward while turning around. It's so easy to forget about the big rock immediately behind you, the one you waded around carefully a bit earlier, while watching a friend land a fish.

This is mostly something done in shallow water, so while the danger of drowning is minimal, getting wet and cold is extremely likely. Worse, it's likely that you'll land hard in shallow water, which can lead to bruising and contusions if you're lucky, or to broken bones or a skull fracture if you're not.

This may sound alarmist, but this is exactly how Datus Proper, the author of the book *What the Trout Said*, came to a bad end when he hit his head on a rock in shallow water while fishing Hyalite Creek outside Bozeman, Montana several years ago.

Equipment that can help

Leggings and quick-dry shorts: You hear about the value of a belt that tightly cinches your waders around your waist to prevent filling your waders with water in case of a fall.

That's true, but how about ditching the waders when it's practical? You'll present a sleeker profile in the current, which will lessen the hydraulic pressure on you and, if you do go down, you'll not be weighted down by the water in your absent waders. Also, I think I'm correct when I say that most of us are averse to the chilling effect of cold water on our nether regions, causing us to think twice before we wade deep enough to dunk said regions.

Wading boots: Yes, most of us already have specialized wading boots, but are they ones that will do the best job of keeping us vertical?

For many years felt soles were the standard of the industry. They do work well on bedrock and on cobble, but I've never found them particularly grippy on large rocks or on algae-covered substrates. They're lousy on muddy or snow-covered banks and none too good on grass. While their performance improves with the addition of studs, they're implicated in the spread of invasive species,

so it may be best to give them the go-by.

There are a great many variations on the rubber sole boot. The high-end boot from the Orvis Company features a sole developed in concert with the Michelin tire folks. I'm not sure what that guarantees, but I note that the boots can be outfitted with studs, which are always helpful. The Simms Co. offers a plethora of boots with felt, Vibram and rubber soles. Many of them can be equipped with studs as well, and Simms offers various types.

The Simms web site has a chart that compares things like traction, support, and weight. You may have noted that I've mentioned studs several times. I think they're a godsend and I wouldn't be without them.

My personal choice for really tough wading conditions are Patagonia Foot Tractor boots with leather uppers by Danner and rubber soles equipped with replaceable shaped aluminum crossbars secured to the boots by Allen bolts. I can't say enough good things about them.

I can say that, on the downside, they are hellaciously expensive and that I was fortunate to find cosmetically imperfect ones on sale at a deep discount. In the big picture, though, at a time when top-end fly rods have pushed past the thousand-dollar mark, half that amount for the most comfortable and effective boot I've ever seen may be a value.

You should ask yourself this question frequently: "What happens if this doesn't go well?"

Wading staffs

I was fortunate to win a Simms wading staff at a Wisconsin State Council TU banquet several years ago. At the time I was just trying to get rid of some bucket raffle tickets and had given little thought to how I might use a staff. I discovered how when I ventured to southwest Montana. It was instrumental in helping to keep me upright when I found myself on the wrong side of a river with no easily fordable crossing in sight.

Using the situational awareness I wrote about earlier, I picked the "least worst" option and set out. The staff hummed and throbbled in the heavy current when I leaned on it more heavily than I thought possible, but I inched my way to safety on the other side, arriving there with a stratospheric adrenaline level and a pulse rate to match.

Admittedly, my leg strength isn't what it used to be, and I'm walking around on a couple of artificial joints that don't offer the support of the original equipment.

But as the philosopher said, time and tide wait for no man, so it's wise to be ahead of the game and to start carrying a wading staff today, even if you're not superannuated like me.

Simms sells a staff equivalent to mine for around \$150. Patagonia has an elegantly designed one for \$10 more.

Former chapter president and frequent angling companion Tom Schnadt tells me that he's taken to carrying an old bamboo ski pole with him. It's lightweight and floats on a tether behind him. The downside here, he acknowledges, is that the pole could possibly shatter under heavy load and effectively become a punji stick on which to fall.

The dangers are not solely in the stream, and a wading staff can be useful in other circumstances. It can help you negotiate a steep or muddy bank when you enter or exit the stream and it can serve as a test probe as you travel the heavily vegetated banks along it. There are often little gullies, beaver holes or even logs hidden by overlying grasses.

Stay in shape

I can picture you shaking your head in disbelief about now. What I'm getting at is that we should all do our best to tend to our most basic piece of wading gear — our legs. A regular exercise program can help you maintain leg strength, flexibility and, consequently, balance.

A stationary bike is but one tool you can use. A health club or YMCA may be able to help design a program for you using additional or other equipment. Even long walks involving substantial changes in elevation are a huge improvement over doing nothing.

Now get out there, have fun and come home safely.

DRY OR DIE, from page 10

August and even into early September are the best times to look for Ephorons. Ephorons differ from the other mayflies I've discussed because they hatch in the late evening into darkness.

The hatches that I have witnessed have been very hit or miss, and often sporadic and sputtering, with the exception of Ephorons, which I'll talk more about later. The Olives, Hendricksons, and Sulphurs are hatches I don't necessarily make a point to target, but they are hatches I'm always looking out for. Anywhere I fish, at almost any time of year, I will have some flies in the box to match these hatches. If I happen to find fish rising to any of these bugs, I've always got a couple of flies to try. Much like stoneflies, you can get as simple or as complicated as you'd like with fly selection. Various sizes of Adams dries in a handful of colors should do the trick most of the time. I've even used a size 14 Royal Wulff to match all three hatches. Again, fish what you're confident in.

When it comes to choosing where to fish these hatches, it boils down to confidence and personal preference. As I mentioned earlier, I don't put in a ton of effort to target these hatches. I'm just always prepared in case I do find a hatch. Fish spots you're confident in. Fish spots you're familiar with. Fish spots you like to fish. Just make sure to have the necessary flies to match what you might find once you're out there.

Ephorons

Ephorons, or white mayflies, as they're commonly called, hatch in the late evening and into early darkness. I've personally found the most Ephoron activity on streams with more rock, but that's just me. The nymphs are burrowers like Hex nymphs, so I don't know why I haven't seen more Ephorons on the streams I Hex fish. Because these mayflies hatch within a short time frame each evening, the hatches can sometimes be quite thick. Picture a Hex hatch, but the bugs are in the size 10-to-14 range. Maybe the bugs aren't as numerous as a good Hex hatch, but neither is the competition from other anglers.

As always, use stealth on your approach during a hatch of any species of mayfly. Maybe there are only a handful of bugs coming off and there are only a couple of fish rising to them. It might only be one small stretch that has any activity. If you're not stealthy, you might blow the only chance you'll find all day. Patience can help you find success as well. If you do find a hatch and fish are keyed in on a particular species, take a moment to observe. What color are the mayflies? What size are the bugs? Exercise the patience needed to match what the fish are eating and your odds of success greatly increase. Persistence helps when you're looking to find one of these mayfly hatches. If you don't find what you're looking for one day, don't give up. Go looking another day. Maybe look at a different spot, or a different river. As with anything in life, it's rare to hit things just right on the first try.

Hex

Hex season is what anglers of the Central Sands Region look forward to all year. Sure, we fish other hatches and other spots, but nothing quite compares to big bugs drenched in darkness. The hex hatch, or more accurately the spin-

ner fall, often gets every fish in the stream on the feed. Fish you've only ever seen in your dreams, or on magazine covers, can be caught at this time of year. The big ones are often still very difficult, but they're the most catchable they'll be all year.

Hex nymphs are burrowers. They dig u-shaped burrows in the soft sediments of stream margins and backwaters. They use the gills on their abdomen to pull water and food through their burrows. When looking for a hex hatch you should look for streams with plenty of muddy backwaters and other areas of soft sediments. When the hatch is on you can often see the Hex duns drifting downstream of these areas right around dusk. When the light is just right you can sometimes see the first brave souls to leave the water get snatched out of the air by waxwings or blackbirds.

Often, the first fish to begin feeding on these drifting duns will be the smaller fish. Unable to contain their excitement they make fools of themselves, splashing and jumping as they begin to feed. The bigger fish will wait for proper darkness before they show up to the banquet. The true giants will often be rising in the thickest tangles of overhanging shrubs. It's usually impossible to drift a fly into spots like these, but the naturals make their way in there just fine.

Stealth is not much of a consideration during the hex hatch. The fish are often so focused on feeding that you can get quite close to them. Obviously the bigger the fish the more stealth you should employ, and if you're on heavily pressured water, the fish can tend to be on the spookier side.

Patience and persistence play larger roles in a successful Hex outing. Just because the bugs don't show up right at dark when they're supposed to doesn't mean they're not around. Maybe there is a spinner fall upstream and it'll take a while for the spent bugs to drift down and get the fish rising on your beat. If your confidence or patience is too low to wait around, you can creep your way upstream listening for feeding fish. If for any number of reasons the puzzle pieces just don't fit together on a given night, don't get discouraged. Persistence is key now. Keep coming back night after night if you must. Try new spots if you think the spot is the problem. The hex season is so short and fleeting. Keep putting the effort in and you'll hit it right.

Grasshoppers

Hopper fishing can be some of the most fun fishing you'll have all year. If you find the right spot, on the right day, the fish can act downright silly. The takes can sometimes be vicious. Other times you'll watch the fish come up nice and slow and inspect your fly before they either sip it in or refuse it altogether. Sometimes the fish want that grasshopper pattern to plop down hard on the water. In fact, certain spots require the splat to draw the fish out of their hiding spots. It's not uncommon to have fish move six feet, eight feet, even 10 feet, sometimes coming from well upstream, to eat your hopper. When hopper fishing is hot, it's hard to have more fun on a trout stream.

Grasshopper spots are not all created equal. Generally, heavy tree cover means poor hopper fishing. I like to look for spots that are more meadow. Grasses and sedges are the sweet spots. I don't mind a stray tree here and there, and scattered shrubs like alder, dogwood and



John Gremmer

JOHN GREMMER'S FAMOUS HEX HATCH PHOTO

The hex hatch, or more accurately the spinner fall, often gets every fish in the stream on the feed. Fish you've only ever seen in your dreams, or on magazine covers, can be caught at this time of year.

ninebark are welcome sights. These random woody species offer shade to the fish, and cover to the angler, as well as the added bonus of a little bit of habitat diversity within the riparian corridor.

Stealth is key while pitching hopper patterns. The waters are typically low and clear during the summer months and the trout are on edge. Heavy footsteps and errant shadows can be your downfall. Persistence is often rewarded while hopper fishing. I cover a lot of water when I'm looking for hopper-hungry trout. I throw a couple casts at every likely spot and keep moving. Make sure to throw casts out in front of you as you move from spot to spot too. You'd be surprised at where a grasshopper pattern will draw fish out from. Splat your hopper down on as much water as you can and you'll find fish that are willing to play along.

Other considerations

Of course there are a ridiculous number of other food sources for the trout in Central Sands Region. Caddisflies can be found just about everywhere, so always carry a couple caddis patterns in varying sizes and colors. Craneflies are often found along our Central Wisconsin trout streams and having a cranefly pattern or two might save the day. Beetles, ants and crickets could be lumped in with the grasshoppers, but they deserve a mention anyway. If dry flies just won't produce, streamers and nymphs can be effective in certain situations and choosing a pattern, size or color are entirely up to personal preference.

Choosing your fishing location

can influence your success quite a bit. Keep in mind the season and the size of the water you're fishing. If it's February, you're probably not going to catch very many fish in the upper headwaters of these streams. If it's August you probably won't find success fishing the lower reaches of these streams. Fish will typically spend their winters in the deeper, slower, lower reaches of our systems, and as the water temperatures climb throughout the year they will move upstream.

The Central Sands Region streams have a character all their own. They are not the lightly fished remote forested freestone streams of the north and northeast part of Wisconsin, full of eager brook trout.

They are not streams lined by pastures and easements and full of riffles like the streams of the Driftless Area.

Central Sands streams often have very well connected and broad floodplains. Their waters are cold and clear and clean. Lacking natural riffles, their waters are often flat and calm.

The finned residents of the Central Sands streams are some of the wariest I've ever encountered. If you're expecting to catch 50 fish in a day of fishing central Wisconsin, you should lower your expectations. It's not a numbers game in central Wisconsin.

The challenge is the reward in fishing the streams in this area. Using stealth, patience and persistence should help you to unlock the secrets held within the streams of the Central Sands.



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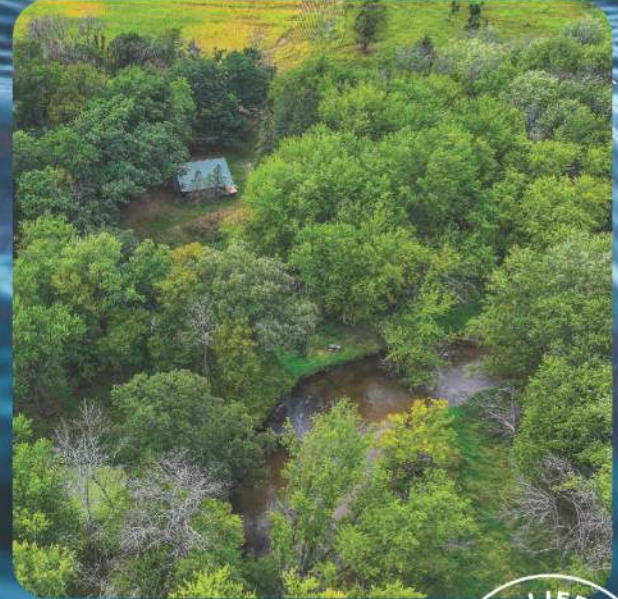
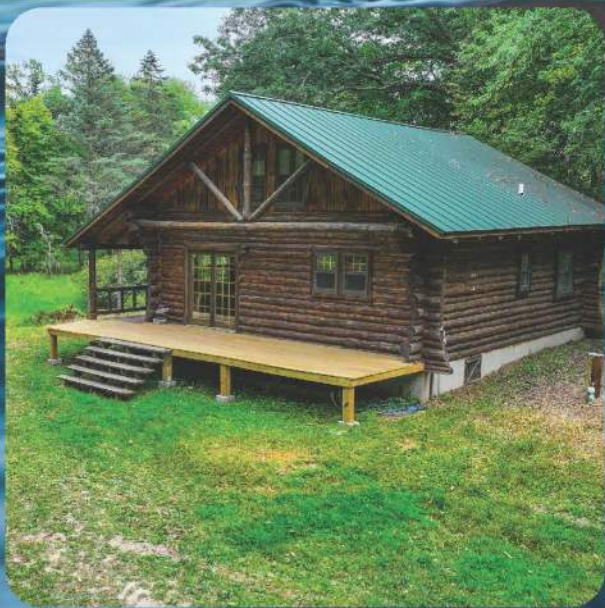


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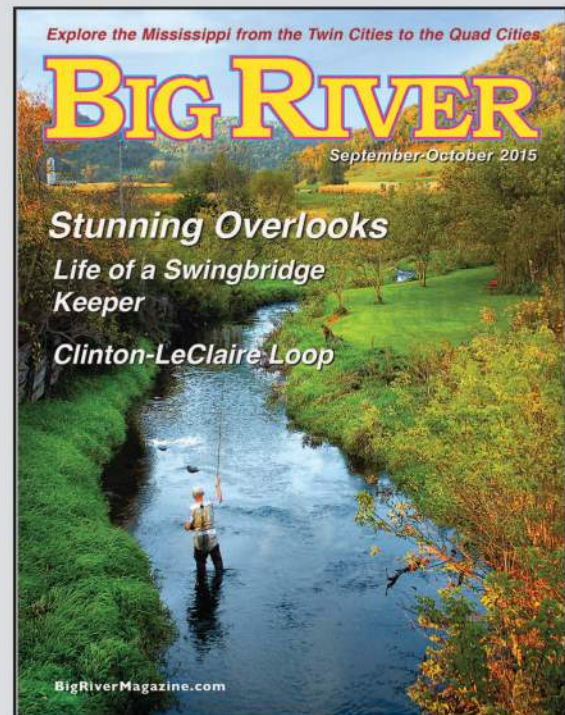
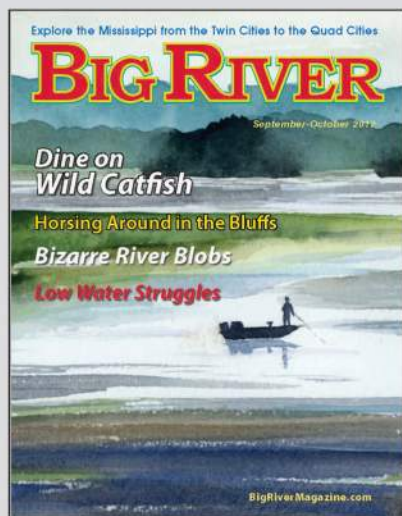
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