News and Views from Wisconsin Trout Unlimited

Wisconsin Trout

Fall 2024

Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited
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State budget and other issues on our radar

After the November elections we will turn our attention to the next state budget. The Governor typically releases a proposed budget in February, and the Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance works through the spring to develop their own version of a budget. With that in mind, Wisconsin Trout Unlimited is laying out its priorities for the upcoming budget and a strategy for advocacy next spring.

Increase the Inland Trout Stamp fee from $10 to $15.

This user fee funds the vast majority of trout habitat work and trout management in Wisconsin. It has been $10 since 2006, while labor, equipment and material costs continue to rise. That means less habitat work is being done than in the past. It's time to increase the fee and provide adequate funding for trout habitat improvement projects in our state. This is the most important thing we can do to ensure future generations have access to cold, clean, fishable water.

Long term reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is Wisconsin's iconic public lands initiative. This program has been the primary funding source for fisheries area land acquisitions and public fishing easements during the last 35 years. Spending for the program is at an all-time low, which has allowed the debt and interest owed to be greatly reduced. The program has traditionally been reauthorized on 10-year intervals, but was renewed for only two years in the 2019-2020 budget and four years in the 2021-2022 budget. It's time for our elected officials to commit to the importance of public lands with a 10-year reauthorization and a modest increase in funding.

Balance the DNR's Fish and Wildlife account

The Fish and Wildlife account is funded primarily through hunting, fishing and trapping license fees, as well as from federal sources like the excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. It is the primary funding source for approximately 500 DNR employees who make up fisheries management staff, wildlife management staff and conservation wardens. The account is projected to have a structural deficit of approximately $16 million by 2026. We're working with a coalition of partners to advocate for solutions to eliminate this deficit and ensure that DNR biologist and technician positions do not incur further cuts.

Other issues we're keeping a close eye on:

Wakeboats are currently unregulated in Wisconsin. They can cause damage to shorelines and lakebeds due to the extreme force that they use to create a wake. They also have the potential to spread aquatic invasive species through their ballast tanks. There are a number of coldwater lakes that are home to populations of trout and we want to make sure they are protected. We are working with a coalition of partners to advocate for sensible regulations to protect our resources while still allowing wakeboarding opportunities on our larger lakes. The coalition is asking for a minimum of 700 feet from shoreline and 30 feet of depth for wakeboat operation in the state. We're also asking for ballast tanks to be emptied and inspected before moving to a different waterbody.

Proposed mining operations pose a threat to water resources. The Council and its partners are closely monitoring prospective mining operations in Wisconsin. As a water-rich state, it is incredibly difficult to operate a mine successfully in Wisconsin without contaminating our waterways. We'll continue to keep a close eye on the Back Forty mine proposal, any plans for the Bend and Reef deposits in central Wisconsin, and exploratory drilling near the headwaters of the Wolf River in northeast Wisconsin. Where and when appropriate, we stand ready to advocate on behalf of our coldwater resources.

As budget season approaches, Wisconsin Trout Unlimited will work to provide opportunities for our members to easily and effectively weigh in on these issues. Please watch for future action alerts via email, social media and future issues of this newspaper.

—Mike Kuhr,
Wisconsin TU Advocacy Chair

Council seeking award nominations

The Wisconsin State Council of TU believes it is important to recognize the outstanding efforts of our members and the broader conservation community, and we have been presenting a number of awards since 1983.

We are currently seeking nominations for our 2024 awards, which we will bestow at our awards banquet February 3, 2025. We rely on you, our members and leaders, to let us know about those who deserve special recognition. So please take time to nominate individuals, groups or others you feel qualify for one of our awards.

Please submit your nominations, including a short narrative, to Awards Committee Chair Todd Franklin by November 15, 2024. Please contact Todd if you have any questions. His email address is toddfranklinwistrout@gmail.com and his other contact information is on page 4.

The awards committee also includes Mike Kuhr, Jim Wierzba, Linn Beck, John Meachen, Scott Allen, Kim McCarthy and Henry Koltz. We welcome additional members to this committee, so please consider it. It takes very little time, and is one of the most rewarding things we do for TU: recognizing those members, chapters, groups, businesses and professionals who support our mission.

State Council Awards for 2024

Resource Award of Merit

Our highest award, the Resource Award of Merit recognizes a person, corporation or organization for outstanding contributions to conservation and may be a nonmember. The award can be presented posthumously.

Silver Trout Chapter of the Year Award

The Silver Trout Award recognizes the chapter that during the past year took innovative and thoughtful approaches to building community and advancing our mission. Criteria we consider include conservation impact, communications, member and community engagement, fundraising and volunteer leadership development.

Distinguished Service-Leadership

In memory of Jeff Carlson, this award recognizes an individual whose enthusiasm, persistence and leadership have inspired generations of conservationists. This award is for an individual whose leadership has enriched the TU community at the chapter, council, NLC or trustee level. A key attribute of leadership recognized by this award is the sharing of ideas, experiences and knowledge with others to nurture and mentor the next generation of coldwater conservationists and leaders.

Distinguished Service-Youth Education

This award recognizes the fundamental importance of creating a new generation of conservationists in a manner that sustains TU's conservation legacy. The award honors individuals who demonstrate exemplary leadership and a deep passion for inspiring young people to become thoughtful, responsible stewards of our coldwater fisheries. Adults and youth are eligible.

Distinguished Service-Service Partnership

This award recognizes an individual who embodies the TU community-building spirit with regards to nurturing and healing veterans and first responders and involving them in TU events, activities and operations.

Reel Partner Award

This award recognizes businesses or organizations that have served as partners with the Council or its chapters in forwarding our mission.

Robert Hunt Resource Professional Award

In honor of Robert Hunt, this award recognizes a conservation professional who has shown concern for our coldwater resources over and above his or her normal duties.

Virtual Council meeting Saturday, Oct. 19

The next Wisconsin State Council meeting is Saturday, October 19 starting at 9 a.m. It will be held via Zoom, and not in person.

Chapter presidents and Council leaders will receive a Zoom invitation. If you would like to view or participate, please contact Council Chair Scott Allen at jscottallen12@gmail.com.

Traverse Valley Creek project completed

In September the Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter, in partnership with the Oakbrook Chapter, completed a stream restoration project on Traverse Valley Creek in Trempealeau County.

The restored section of stream, along highway X, about 5.5 miles from the junction of X and State Highway 93, contains vital spawning gravel and holding habitat for brook trout. Habitat improvements include bank shaping, riffle and pool forming rock weirs, cross-channel logs and root wads.

The chapters' financial contributions were matched by a National Fish Habitat Partnership grant awarded through the Driftless Area Restoration Effort. An education and outreach component was incorporated into the grant proposal, so that while trout are the primary focus, they are not the sole beneficiaries of this project.

Students from Arcadia, Independence and Whitehall High Schools visited the site to seed the project, learn about the habitat features and do an entomology survey. The students are taking an animal science class and gained valuable hands-on experience in scientific observation and resource management.

—TUDARE

STREAM PROJECT ALSO AN OUTDOOR EDUCATIONAL CLASSROOM
Students from Arcadia, Independence and Whitehall High Schools visited the site to seed the project, learn about the habitat features and do an entomology survey. The students are taking an animal science class and gained valuable hands-on experience in scientific observation and resource management.

What will your legacy be?

The Council has established an endowment so that you can support our mission by making a tax-deductible gift through your will, trust, life insurance or retirement account.

The Wisconsin State Council announces the creation of a new permanent endowment fund — entitled the Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited Fund.

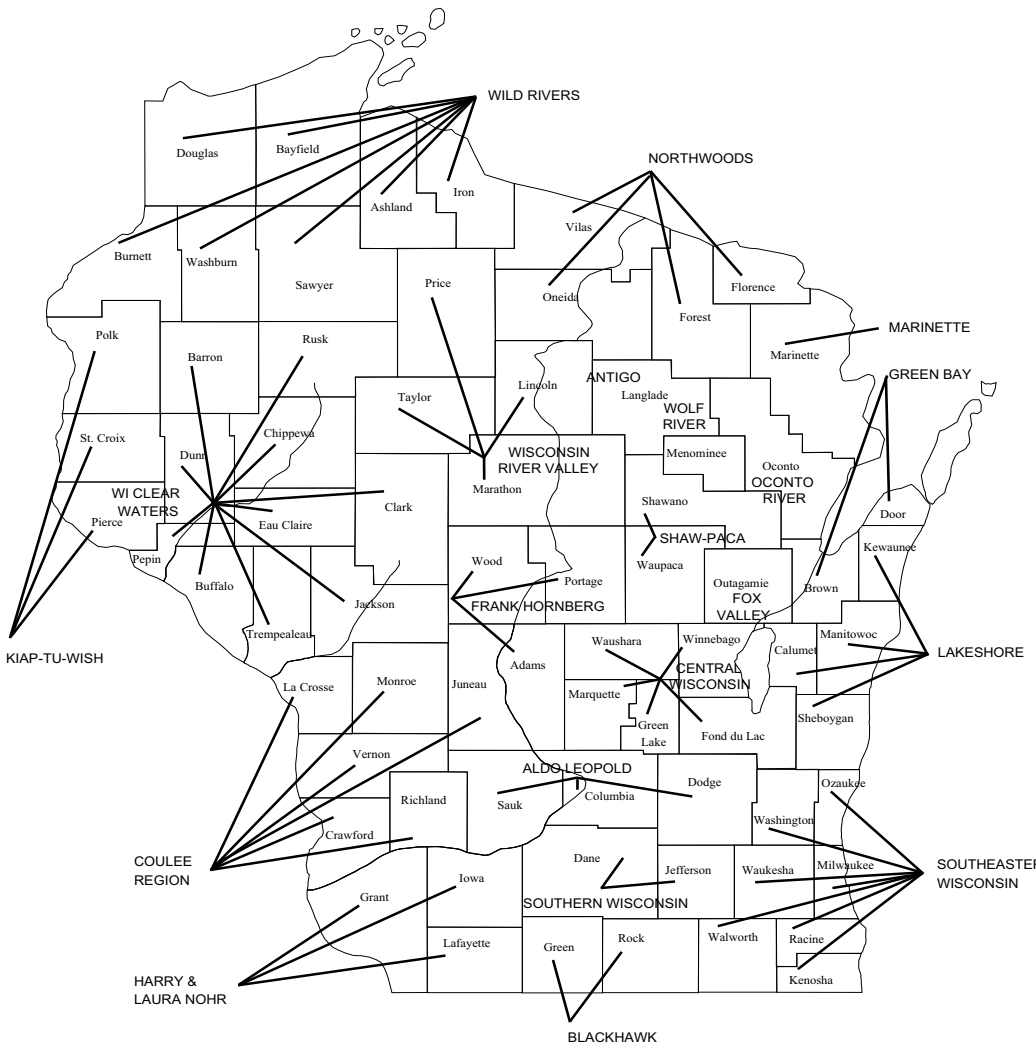
The fund will be managed by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Investment proceeds from this fund will either be accumulated within the fund or used by the Council to support our mission. Donations to this fund are tax-deductible.

The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)3 charitable organization that was formed in 1986 to protect Wisconsin's lands, waters and wildlife by providing conservation funding, partnerships and programming and by connecting people to nature. The foundation currently manages more than $10 million in 124 endowment funds to support their conservation mission.

You can donate to the Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited Fund by:

- A gift of cash
- A gift of appreciated securities
- A gift through a personal donor advised fund.
- By naming this fund as a beneficiary of your will, life insurance policy, IRA or retirement plan.
- Through a bequest, charitable gift annuity or a life-income fund.

Wisconsin TU's 21 Chapters



Visit the Wisconsin State Council 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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Diversity Initiative: Heidi Oberstadt, 456 Wadleigh St., Stevens Point, WI 54481; 715-573-5104; heidi.oberstadt@gmail.com

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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Landowner "Lunch and Learn" highlights stream restoration

By Peter Jonas,
TUDARE Partnership Specialist

Without willing, conservation-minded landowners, very few stream restoration projects would happen in the Driftless Area. More than 90 percent of trout streams here flow through private land, so educating landowners about the benefits of stream restoration, and building relationships, are critical first steps in assuring that stream restoration work will continue into the future.

With this reality in mind, the Driftless Area Restoration Effort partnered with the Buffalo and Trempealeau County Conservation Departments to host a "Lunch and Learn" event in August on the banks of Swinns Valley Creek for landowners in the two counties.

30 landowners attend

Thirty landowners and 17 resource professionals attended the event, enjoyed a catered meal, participated in a panel discussion with lots of questions and answers and walked a stretch of stream where they could see the sloping of the banks and habitat features.

One of the learning components built into the event was the location, because the farm that hosted the gathering is a model of good conservation practices. There is cropland on each side of the stream, but the stream is protected by a generous grass buffer which is cut for hay. Overall, the setting served as a great example of how a restored trout stream can be integrated into a working agricultural operation.

Hearing from their peers

The planning of the panel discussion was critical to the event's success. In the past, we have often relied on resource professionals to be the "up-front" people who spoke about stream projects and their benefits. For this event, we decided to invite a panel of landowners (all farmers) who have previously had restoration work done on their streams. Resource professionals were invited to attend and simply build rapport with the community.

As Buffalo County Conservationist Cale Severson said, "You don't address suspicion of government among farmers by having a bunch of people from the government talk at them."

This peer-to-peer approach proved effective, with audience members asking a wide range of questions related to easements, costs, timeline, agricultural management and property values. Several landowners indicated that they would like TUDARE or their county conservationist to visit their property and assess their trout stream.

A mini grant from the National Wildlife Federation made the event possible. One of the grant conditions was that TUDARE distribute pre- and post-event surveys to the participants because the foundation is particularly interested in researching what kind of events or programs "move the needle" to affect the adoption of conservation practices by landowners. The surveys also provided us with important feedback about what works and what doesn't.

Council Youth Fishing Camp succeeds against challenges

Although we started off short on adult mentors and the weather didn't cooperate, results were successful, as expected.

Every year we bring back former campers, and this year we needed them more than ever.

Being short handed, we had them work in teams with some of the campers, filling in for our missing adult mentors, and it all worked out. Students received the instruction they needed to make this year a success, and we owe a huge thank you to the adult and youth mentors who worked hard to pull it off.

The weather was interesting, to say the least. This was the first time we had to stop an activity, when a thunderstorm came out of nowhere while we were fishing on the Wild Rose Millpond. On Saturday night we typically provide the students with a final fishing tune-up with their mentors before the Sunday morning fishing excursions.

The evening started out with sunshine, but clouds came in and it started to rain, eventually turning into a torrential downpour. But most the of the campers continued fishing, and by the end of the night it was back to a sprinkle again. Fortunately the rain didn't blow out the streams for the Sunday morning fishing.

On Saturday morning campers and mentors joined a CWTU workday, including DNR presentations on stream habitat, as well as shocking demonstration.

They cover all aspects of their work for the campers, and then the campers join in on the workday activities. This is followed by a great meal from Central Wisconsin Chapter volunteers.

This is an important part of our camp, and I want to thank CWTU for the opportunity to come and join in on their workday, as well as the DNR's Shawn Sullivan, Scott Bunde and the rest of the DNR crew for their time and efforts on two great conservation programs. A big thank you also goes out to Laura Tucker and her crew for the great lunch.

The camp ended on a very high note. On the Sunday morning fish-a-longs we had enough volunteers for a one-on-one experience with each student. More importantly, most of the campers caught fish.

We still need additional volunteers to help with the planning and operation of the camp. We have openings on our committee, and we would love to see more TU members involved. If you are interested in helping to keep the youth camp strong, please reach out to me at 920-216-7408 or chlbeck@att.net.

Linn Beck, WITU Youth Camp

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

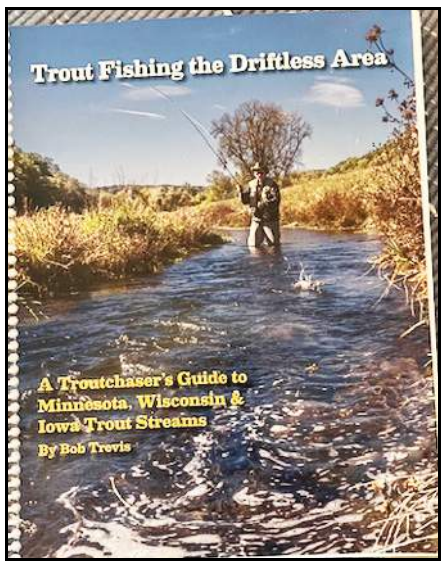
Book Review

Fishing the Driftless Area: A Troutchaser's Guide to Minnesota, Wisconsin & Iowa Trout Streams

By Duke Welter

This is Bob Trevis' second book about fishing the Driftless Area, and he continues to tell it like it is for anglers. It's useful when he tells the reader this stream is not worth your effort, and it generally comports with some of my own opinions, or is too small or brushy or impossible to get into to bother with.

He's careful reporting where there is and isn't legal access, and where you're wise to stop and ask for permission from a landowner. Combined here in Wisconsin with the DNR's TROUT on-line tool, there's a pretty complete picture of public access. None of the recent guide publications or online resources includes some existing easements because they're not held by the DNR: On Citron Creek by the Prairie Rod & Gun Club, on Bear Creek by the Durand Sportsmans Club and on the North Fork Bad Axe by Wisconsin Trout Unlimited.



This is a more ambitious effort than his first, covering the unglaciated trout streams of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. Trevis accidentally credits the Wisconsin's Driftless region with 42,000 miles of trout water, when it's closer to 4,000, with about 6,000 miles of among the three states, but what's an extra zero among anglers?" I haven't fished the 40 best steams within 30 miles of my front door in 10 years of living in Viroqua, so what would I do with 4,000?

The book does a good job of steering the angler along quite a few of those good streams, pointing out where access paths exist and are or aren't signed, and where access is permissive rather than mandatory.

Several nice features of this book include a fortnightly guide to hatches in Driftless Area streams throughout the season, a solid bibliography of the must-have books about fishing the region, and suggestions for new anglers and women looking to break into the sport.

Along the way Trevis offers suggestions about stream etiquette, which everyone should know and review every so often.

Hatch charts often rely on specific dates when a particular bug is emerging, but Trevis recognizes the vagaries of weather and fish behavior can shift the times when particular flies are effective. For instance, trout may get keyed in to a particular insect and feed on it for days, but for several days after the emergence is done an imitative fly may still prompt them to strike.

All things considered, this Troutchaser's guide is a valuable addition to the angler's resources for fishing in this special area.

"Fishing the Driftless Area: A Troutchaser's Guide to Minnesota, Wisconsin & Iowa Trout Streams" By Bob Trevis, Trevmar, Inc., St. Paul MN, 227 Pages, $39.95

Mining update

Our quarterly mining update from our friends at the River Alliance of Wisconsin.

Johnson Bridgwater, Water Advocates Organizer, River Alliance of Wisconsin

Wisconsin mining issues have been generally quiet this past season. However, actions in Oneida County in August reminded us once again why we must remain vigilant.

Behind the scenes, and without knowledge of the Oneida County Board, out-of-state mining companies met this summer in Madison with Oneida County Board Chair Scott Holewinski. A hastily assembled board resolution submitted by Holewinski at the end of August, related to his meetings and in support of mining, received immense public backlash and was voted down by the board 13-6.

River Alliance, Sierra Club, Oneida County Clean Waters Action, Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association, and many others pitched in to make the public aware of the situation on very short notice, and almost 200 emails and phone calls of opposition were reported by the clerk and the board.

Residents and tribal members spoke passionately against mining and in support of the environmental riches of the area that are essential to tourism, the outdoor recreation industry, and the Northwoods way of life. We can celebrate the fact that the Oneida County Board's debate cast some sunlight on mining interests' continued wooing of county leadership as well as the passionate opposition to mining that continues among Oneida County residents years after they cast a strong majority vote in an advisory referendum rejecting a proposed metallic mine in the Town of Lynne.

Stay tuned, as we will continue to keep our eyes on these activities in Oneida County.

Wisconsin mining and Greenlight Metals

One of the companies that spoke with Holewinski was Greenlight Metals. Their financial situation is not healthy, and they have made no progress on either exploration project they have been pursuing in Wisconsin (Bend deposit in Taylor County and Reef deposit in Marathon County), but it is clear now our continued attention is called for despite outward appearances.

Copperwood Mine grant rejected by Mich. Senate

The State of Michigan, specifically the Michigan State Senate, has quietly killed a $50 million grant that the Michigan Economic Development Corporation had been shepherding on behalf of the proposed Copperwood Mine owners, Highland Copper, a Canadian corporation.

The proposed Copperwood mine and its 400-acre waste lake would sit on a hill above Lake Superior, posing a serious threat to Lake Superior and its fisheries. Although the grant was recommended by MEDC and approved by the Michigan House of Representatives, final approval rested with the Senate Appropriations Committee.

We are happy to report that the grant was stricken from the 2025 Michigan State Budget. Even though the action was done quietly with no formal vote nor public statement from the Appropriations Committee, we can claim this as a major victory for water and wilderness. It sends a strong message to potential investors as well.

Proposed Copperwood Mine Studied by Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission

Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) has completed its dam safety analysis on Highland Copper's first proposal for a tailings dam that HC would build as part of a long-term 400-acre waste disposal facility for the proposed Copperwood Mine.

Unsurprisingly, their analysis proves what we have been concerned about: A breach of the proposed Copperwood tailings dam would absolutely flow into Lake Superior. Multiple scenarios were modeled, and they all point to the same conclusion: Building a dam on a hill above Lake Superior is a terrible idea that puts fisheries, drinking water and wildlife at risk.

GLIFWC video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Go6JnA9r92Q

GLIFWC full report: http://data.glifwc.org/download/archive.bio/copperwood_dba_2024_07_11.pdf

On the federal level

More bad federal legislation related to the extractive industries, including mining, has been introduced in the U.S. Senate, favoring foreign mining interests more than our own priceless natural resources. We would ask all of you who engage your elected officials, whether local, state or federal, to consider spending a little time on mining education. There has never been a metallic-sulfide mine operated in our water-rich region that has not polluted the water, and this is a basic fact.

Do you have questions or comments? Feel free to contact me about all things mining. You can also visit River Alliance of Wisconsin's Mining Page for online resources dedicated to mining education, and you can sign up for our "Mining Updates" emails. Simply visit wisconsinrivers.org/mining/ or email me at jbridgwater@wisconsinrivers.org,

Trout-beaver workshop presentations available for viewing

Bradd Sims and Matthew Mitro Wisconsin DNR

The 12th annual Wisconsin DNR and UW-Stevens Point workshop on trout stream restoration was held in August at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve in LaFarge. This year's workshop focused on beaver and trout in the Driftless Area and was a follow-up to last year's workshop on beaver and trout in northern Wisconsin streams.

The workshop series was started by Ray White for Wisconsin DNR fisheries biologists to bring in experts to discuss important trout habitat issues, with the goal of helping biologists make better-informed management decisions pertaining to trout in streams. The workshops have been open to all and have brought together fisheries professionals, trout stream enthusiasts and others from many different agencies as well as conservation and angling groups.

Recordings of presentations from the 2024 workshop are available for viewing at https://vimeo.com/showcase/11324609. Following is a list of presenters and the topics they discussed:

- Ray White, a retired fisheries biologist from the Wisconsin Conservation Department, kicked off the workshop welcoming attendees and giving an overview of beaver and trout, Driftless Area land use, trout streams within the Driftless Area and some fisheries management history.
- Associate Director of the Rivers Studies Center at UW-La Crosse and Department Chair of the UW-La Crosse Geography and Environmental Science program Colin Belby presented on Driftless Area stream processes, forms and functions, including geomorphology, hydrology and recent baseflow increases.
- Shawn Rossler, a wildlife biologist and furbearer specialist with the Wisconsin DNR, presented on Wisconsin beaver abundance and policies, past and future.
- Steve Windels of Northern Wildlife Consultants, and a wildlife biologist at Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota, presented on beaver natural history, dam building and water storage, beavers and biodiversity and beaver movements and dispersal.
- Fisheries biologist Kirk Olson of the Wisconsin DNR presented on trout streams and beaver management in the Driftless Area of Wisconsin.
- Matthew Mitro, a fisheries research scientist with the Wisconsin DNR, presented research results from his ongoing study on trout and beaver in Wisconsin streams. Here he focused on study streams in the Driftless Area and discussed beaver impacts on trout populations in two popular Driftless Area streams: Big Spring Branch in Iowa County and Elk Creek in Richland and Vernon counties.
- Tracey Hames, director of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, wrapped up the day with a presentation on how to think about beaver and trout stream interactions within the Driftless Area using an interdisciplinary approach.

Many attendees remained for a second day to visit Elk Creek and Tainter Creek, two streams that have been impacted by beaver, as part of Mitro's statewide study on trout and beaver,.

Presentation recordings are also available for the 11th annual DNR/UW-SP workshop in Hayward in 2023 at https://vimeo.com/showcase/10601979

New streambank easement on Plum Creek

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources finalized the paperwork to purchase a streambank easement from Mississippi Valley Conservancy in an effort to provide fishing access along a stretch of Plum Creek, a Class 1 trout stream in the Conservancy's Plum Creek Conservation Area located just north of Wauzeka in Crawford County.

This long-awaited access for anglers was made possible by funding from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. The 21-acre streambank easement connects fishable parcels on both ends of this easement, so anglers will now have access to this entire corridor. The Conservancy is working with partners on a restoration design to reconnect the creek with the surrounding floodplain to better withstand future flooding events and to improve the health and diversity of the wetland, streambank and floodplain natural communities.

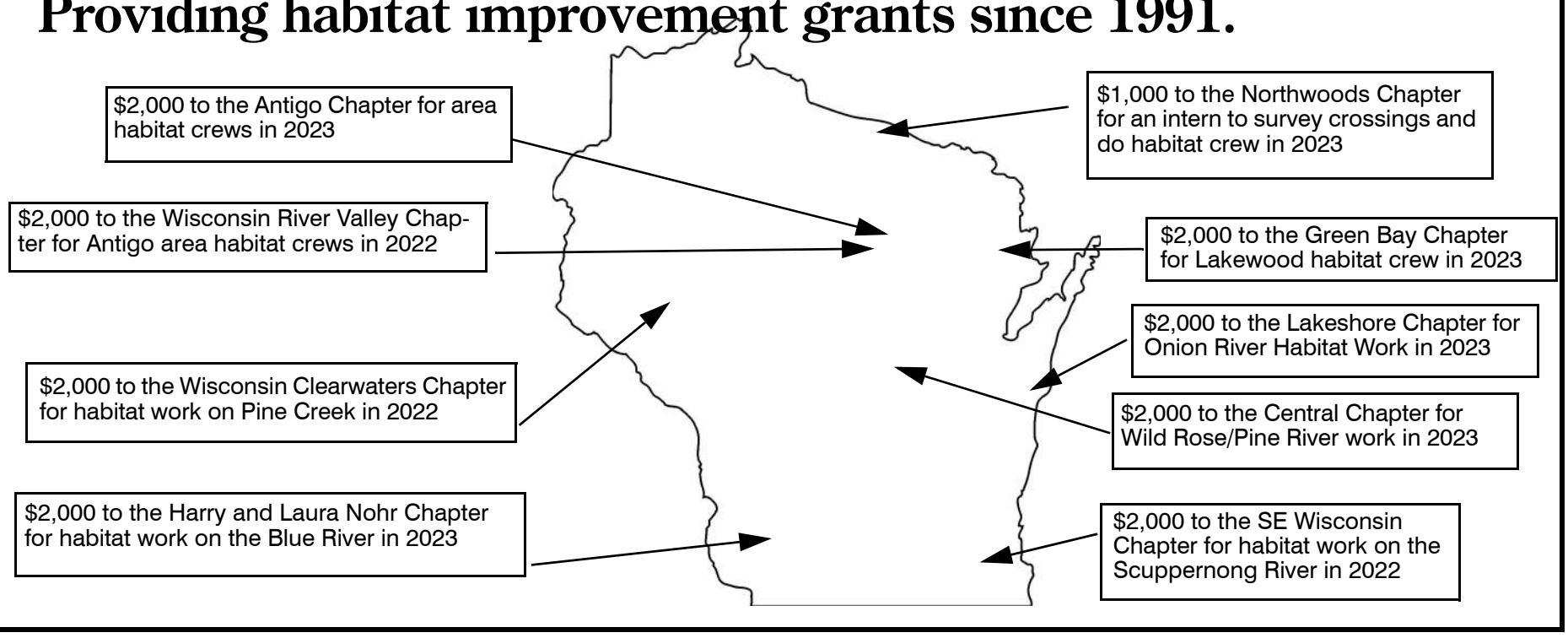
For more information about the Plum Creek Conservation Area and a map, please visit MississippiValleyConservancy.org/protected-land, or contact Restoration Ecologist Michael Reitz at michael@mississippivalleyconservancy.org.

NEW PLUM CREEK DNR EASEMENT CONNECTS TWO OTHER EASEMENTS

Please support Friends of Wis. TU in 2024

Ten of our chapters received grants totaling $25,000 for projects across Wisconsin in 2024. The Friends of Wisconsin TU habitat improvement grant program wishes to thank all of our donors for their generous support. We could not do this without you.

Providing habitat improvement grants since 1991.



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MAIL TO: Kim McCarthy
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Green Bay, WI 54313

Name

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City, State Zip Phone #

Watershed Access Fund explained

Everything you need to know to become a valued supporter of our grant program that helps acquire properties for public fishing access.

One purpose

The Watershed Access Fund has only one purpose: Make more trout waters available to the public for trout fishing. The Council established the Watershed Access Fund in 2010 after being asked several times about helping to purchase trout waters, and realizing we lacked a funding mechanism. The fund will never be used for any land acquisition that does not involve trout resources, and on seven occasions it has helped acquire parcels of trout water around the state.

Flexibility is a key to the success the fund has had in obtaining property. It's not limited in the methods that can be used to finalize acquisitions.

We can obtain easements either alone or in partnerships. We can become involved in direct purchase of properties, almost always in partnership with other individuals, land trusts, local TU chapters or units of government. We can provide bridge loans to hold a property while others are raising funds to complete the acquisition. We can help to cover expenses for organizations who may need to write large grants; as we did with a parcel in northern Wisconsin that added more than 500 acres of land to public ownership.

One unique feature of the Watershed Access Fund is that we can act quickly. Many conservation groups involved in land acquisition are approached about possibly obtaining a parcel and then have to begin fundraising to cover the costs. We keep all of the donations to our fund in easily accessed accounts so that we can act almost immediately when an opportunity arises.

I recall a situation in which we were approached to join a partnership to acquire a great property. The organizing group was surprised that we had cash ready to deploy, which made finalizing the funding for the property much easier. We are sometimes approached because funding for a parcel has come up short, which could jeopardize the acquisition.

Having ready cash has allowed us to quickly act to finalize the purchase of several key parcels. This is important because if the fundraising schedule stretches beyond the time a seller is able to wait, the opportunity for acquiring the parcel may be lost.

No discussion of public access would be complete without mentioning the importance of the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program to obtaining parcels of land for public use. In recent years the acquisitions that we have participated in have all featured grant requests from the stewardship fund that covers the first 50 percent of the acquisition. Partnering groups then need to put together funding packages for the remaining half of the purchase. Without stewardship fund grants, it would become much more difficult to make land acquisitions.

Please advocate for the stewardship program

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program will be coming up for reauthorization by the Wisconsin legislature in the near future. Reauthorization is a primary goal of the Council, and our Legislative Committee encourages you to contact your legislators about this.

Finally, we want to thank our donors for recognizing the importance of adding to our publicly accessible trout waters. The Watershed Access Fund is 100 percent funded by voluntary contributions. We greatly appreciate the support of our loyal donors and encourage more members to lend their support to this highly successful program.

—Kim McCarthy – Watershed Access Fund Coordinator

Watershed Access Fund: Obtaining public access

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

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Wisconsin's springs are truly special things

By Gillian Pomplun, Reporter, Crawford County Independent & Kickapoo Scout

Almost 50 citizens attended a recent presentation about our state's springs by Wisconsin State Geologist Sue Swanson, presented by the Crawford Stewardship Project (CSP) and including a tour of several local springs.

"I grew up on a farm in northern Illinois, and when I went off to college, I knew that I would study either biology or geology," Swanson told the group. "Geology won out, and after graduation I did a stint in the Peace Corps in Africa, then attended graduate school in Madison, and then taught geology at Beloit College."

Swanson's talk covered the contribution of springs to Wisconsin's livelihood, groundwater use as it relates to springs, mapping and describing springs, how springs form and special spring resources in the state.

"In Wisconsin, springs can be found in every geological environment in the state," Swanson explained. "Springs have been involved in every major economic venture in the state as well."

A passion for crenology

It was clear watching Swanson speak about springs that she has a genuine passion for their study – a discipline she said is known as crenology, from the Latin word crene, which means spring.

"Springs are almost always very special places which support a variety of rare microhabitats," Swanson explained. "Near springs, you see cool temperatures which are stable year round, with groundwater and moisture cooling the air. For this reason, you can often find members of rare and endangered species in proximity to them."

Some examples of rare and endangered species that can be found near springs include the fairy slipper (Calypso bulbosa), Hines emerald dragonfly (Somatochlora hineana) and brown and brook trout. Brook trout in particular require cold, clean water to thrive.

Ag and economic uses

Agriculturally, European settlers used springs for cooling food in the summer months, and to prevent food from freezing in the winter. Springs also provided water for humans and for livestock.

Economically, springs historically attracted visitors who wanted to benefit from the restorative and medicinal properties of spring water. In more modern times, great sums of money have been made from bottling and marketing spring water.

"When educating citizens about springs, it can be challenging because springs are not always visible," Swanson told the group.

"Springs are the sites of active geological processes, and are indicative of what is happening with our groundwater, upon which 70 percent of state residents rely for their drinking water."

Swanson took a moment to explain the groundwater cycle and how water moves from a high point toward a low point in a watershed. She said that water moves both over the surface in stormwater runoff events, but also through infiltration in the soil profile into the bedrock system below where groundwater aquifers are located.

Eventually, both means of moving water over and through the landscape will feed the water into the lowest area in the system, which can be a spring, seep or a body of surface water such as a lake or a river.

Spring inventory

Swanson helped with a statewide inventory of springs, and the results were published in a 2019 report that can be downloaded from the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey website.

The cross-departmental team inventoried a total of 1,377 springs across the state of Wisconsin. Of those, 1,059 were historically mapped features, and 318 were newly identified features. In the process, 780 sites were visited, and 415 springs in 58 counties were mapped.

"The inventory focused on mapping and describing 'large' springs, with flows of at least 110 gallons-per-minute," Swanson said. "Our goal was to create a publicly available springs database, and to determine the factors that contribute to the formation of springs."

Swanson said most springs surveyed are called rheocrene springs, which naturally discharge into a defined stream channel. Three percent of the springs surveyed are "hillslope springs," which initially emerge from a steep slope and may eventually form channelized flow. One percent of the springs surveyed were limnocrene springs, which discharge to a lake. These kinds of springs are also widespread in the state, but are difficult to survey because they may not be visible from the shoreline and are not easily accessible.

There are other types of springs that were not included in the survey. Those include "fracture" springs, which discharge groundwater from joints of fractures in bedrock, and "seepage-filtration" springs, which discharge groundwater from small openings in permeable material.

Distribution in Wisconsin

The greatest number of springs in the state (39) were found in Richland County, followed by Grant County with 38, and Crawford County with 33. Dane and Vernon counties aren't far behind.

According to Swanson, the map of spring locations in the state corresponds with the state's mapped geology. More springs are located in the horseshoe-shaped area of the state that starts on the eastern side near Door County, runs down the eastern side and across the south, and then back up the western side, characterized by karst geology.

In the northern glaciated parts of the state, where the bedrock was scoured down to a hard, crystalline granite, fewer springs are seen. In areas at the edge of glaciated areas, moraines are found, and "depression" springs can be found in these areas.

"Specific conductivity is a measure of what kinds of dissolved solids are found in spring water, and are an indication of the amount of time that spring water has been in contact with bedrock geology before emerging," Swanson explained.

"For instance, in the Driftless Area north of the Wisconsin River, in Crawford, Vernon and Richland counties, the aquifers are located deeper in the profile in a quartz sandstone layer, which is less dissolvable, resulting in mid-level specific conductivity. In Grant County, the aquifer is located in karst rock, which is more dissolvable, and will show higher specific conductivity. In northern Wisconsin, specific conductivity is very low because crystalline granite is not very dissolvable."

TOUR OF SPRING IN THE DRIFTLESS AREA
State Geologist Sue Swanson talks about a beautiful hillslope spring in rural Soldiers Grove. "In Wisconsin, springs can be found in every geological environment in the state," Swanson explained. "Springs have been involved in every major economic venture in the state as well."

Swanson explained that in the Driftless Area north of the Wisconsin River, rheocene springs occur in sand and gravel, and are seepage filtration springs; in ordovician (Prairie du Chien and Ancell groups – dolomite, some limestone and shale, and sandstone), and are rheocrene and hillslope springs, in the shape of fracture or contact springs; and in Cambrian sandstone, and are rheocrene springs shaped like seepage or filtration springs. In this area, 195 springs were mapped with a mean specific conductivity of 564, which is described as "moderate."

In the Driftless Area south of the Wisconsin River, springs occur in sand and gravel, and are rheocrene springs shaped like seepage or filtration springs; and in the ordovician (Sinnipee Group – dolomite, and some limestone and shale) bedrock formations, and are rheocrene springs shaped like fracture springs. In this area 35 springs were mapped with a mean specific conductivity of 742, described as "high."

Statewide, the average flow of springs was 0.96 cubic-feet-per-second (about a bathtub full per minute). The highest flow of a spring is the Big Spring, located in Donald Park in Dane County near Mt. Vernon. The spring with the greatest surface area is the Mecan Spring in Waushara County, located on public property.

Tour of springs

After Swanson's talk, the group toured several springs in the Soldiers Grove area. The first two were located on a property along County H, formerly the Peterson farm and now owned by Kent Bergamann. From there, the group moved on to view a spring located at Dancing Waters Permaculture Cooperative on Sleepy Hollow Road.

Bergamann has owned the parcel where his home (a log cabin restored by Bergamann) for some years, and recently acquired an adjacent parcel closer to the road. Bergamann's initial land parcel contains a beautiful hillslope spring, which he has restored and manages to preserve its quality and beauty.

A statue of the Virgin Mary graces the location where the water emerges from the hillside, and from there the water flows a short distance down into a spring-fed creek, one of the headwaters of Baker Creek which flows through Soldiers Grove before joining the Kickapoo River.

"My family used to farm here, and I spent many holidays on this farm as a youth," CSP's Joe Childs told the tour group. "Now, I pasture cattle on fenced-in areas on the parcel recently acquired."

Childs said that the combined parcels actually contain four springs, but that the group would only tour two of them. One of the four Childs described as "very special," and said Bergamann had found several rare and endangered species at the location. One of those is the blue-spotted salamander, a relatively slender blue-black salamander with whitish or blue spots on its back.

The second spring visited on the property is on the new parcel recently acquired by Bergamann. It is a larger spring, with a flow of 400 gallons-per-minute.

"This spring has been impacted by invasive species like velvet grass," Childs explained. "To remove it, Kent uses a DNR-approved method to drag the spring pond, removing the grass."

One tour participant asked Sue Swanson if it is safe to drink spring water.

"When in doubt, don't drink spring water, especially in agricultural areas in Wisconsin," Swanson responded. "Contamination with both nitrate and bacteria are possible, as well as from surface contaminants, for instance from animals who drink water from the spring, and do all the other things that animals do."

Another tour participant asked if it is possible to have spring water tested.

"You can have spring water tested, and the labs at UW-Stevens Point and the State Lab of Hygiene can do that testing for you," Swanson responded.

"One of the challenges with testing spring water, especially 'flashy' springs whose flow volume fluctuates rapidly after a rain event, is that the water quality can also change rapidly – for flashy springs, multiple tests are required to develop a good picture of their water quality."

Commentary

Time to kick the hatchery habit

It's time to stop 150 years of waste and harm.

Ray J. White

Remember your first trout? The place? The moment? For 11-year-old me it was while wading a creek in blue jeans and gym shoes on a sultry June evening. A wizened fly fisher named Henry was hosting Dad and me at his cabin for the hatch of "giant mayflies," now just called "the hex hatch." We used catgut leaders and tied on a size 8 Spielstad Special, which featured a yellow body, long sparse tail, white calf-tail wing and yellow hackle.

After supper, we set off in the car. They let me out at a bridge. Henry pointed downstream. "Go to that long riffle," he said. "It's nice and open. Your fly won't get caught in branches. Stand in the middle and face upstream. At about nine, the flies will come off the water. Lotsa trout'll rise to get 'em. Cast four feet above a rise so your fly drifts over that spot. The trout'll take it." Then he and Dad drove elsewhere.

Sure enough, the hatch came on. Swarms of mayflies rose high in the air, a blizzard of huge fluttering flakes backlit by yellowish-pink dusk filtered through distant trees. And sure enough, trout rose all over the place in frenzied splashing.

Right away I caught the first trout of my life, the first I'd ever seen. But what a lousy looking thing it was, barely over six inches. It had a gray belly with purplish hue, merging to dull yellow on the sides and back, plus rusty spots. How disgusting. I knew it had to be a brown trout. But gosh, I'd caught lots of perch and bluegills bigger than that with cane pole and worms, and those fish were far more beautiful.

I creeled the little guy, anyway, and caught and kept two more just like it before dark when the men came in the car and picked me up. "Well," asked Dad, "how did you do?"

"I got three of those things." That's all I could say.

"Those things?!" sputtered Henry. "They're trout! You don't call 'em things!" But, for the life of me, I couldn't see why anyone thought such fish were so great.

For beginner's fishing, Henry had put me where the state dumped gullible hatchery trout. I probably thought, like most folks, that hatcheries are where trout come from and didn't know life there caused the dull color. I didn't know about wild trout either, the beautiful products of nature, superior in other ways, too. I didn't know that the casting was easy because cows grazed banks bare, or that the billows of white foam jiggling at meander bends came from dissolved manure. Nor did I know that the big mayflies came from massive silt-beds, a result of land erosion.

Like others, I was at the receiving end of a fishery system that was overdone, self-delusionary, mismanaged and misused. The concrete raceways of 13 state fish factories produced synthetic versions of the real thing. At the system's other end, up a chain of command, sat administrators of the Wisconsin Conservation Department, precursor to the DNR. The chain was short, for hatcheries were almost everything. Among the 13 hatchery foreman, only one was a trout angler, and the others may never had seen a wild trout. The system was out of touch with nature, science and angling. Biologists feared reprisals from the legislature for suggesting what they knew as scientists would be best: reducing or eliminating stocking. Much of that system and fear still exists.

Unheeded warnings

Already in the 1940s—the decade of my age-11 perplexity—one of the world's eminent biologists, our own Aldo Leopold (who fished the same creek), wrote the following:

"Very intensive management of game or fish lowers the unit value of the trophy by artificializing it."

Consider, for example, a trout raised in a hatchery and newly liberated in an over-fished stream. The stream is no longer capable of natural trout production. Pollution has fouled its waters, or deforestation and trampling have warmed and silted them. No one would claim that this trout has the same value as a wholly wild one caught out of some unmanaged stream in the high Rockies. Its esthetic connotations are inferior... (Its liver, one authority says, is so degenerated by hatchery feeding as to forebode an early death.)

And then Leopold was gone. He died in 1948 at age 61, at the height of his career, and shortly before the printing of A Sand County Almanac, in which the above quote appeared. He was an influential member of the Conservation Commission, now Natural Resources Board. The commission had been his idea. With longer life, he might have sent fishery management on a better path.

In the same era, Canadian R. B. Miller studied poor stream performance of stocked trout. He concluded that "a hatchery is an admission of failure"— failure to manage properly. But despite Leopold, Miller and other experts, fishery administrators and anglers went on assuming that to have trout fishing, the trout must be "planted."

Reformed, but still flawed

Stark difference between wild and hatchery trout was always obvious to those of us who handled them by the hundreds and thousands during work in streams year in and year out. Eventually the DNR reformed its program. Now it emphasizes habitat and wild trout. It stocks far fewer streams. It bases much of its artificial breeding on wild-trout genetics, testing to assure presence of only wild genes and recording what's worked in the natural world. This enables better survival and reproduction than the formerly stocked trout. But the program doesn't eliminate all adversely mutated genes and it often stocks

Wisconsin Historical Society

PLANTING TROUT IN WAUPACA COUNTY IN 1936

fish two or more generations removed from the wild.

Mislabeled "wild trout stocking," the breeding and rearing spoil the fish a bit. A wild trout is one hatched from an egg buried by its mother in streambed gravel. Artificial spawning, even if using wild parents, skips crucial processes, as does artificial rearing, even if brief. So, the practice is "semi-wild trout stocking."

In the spawning, DNR personnel, not the fish themselves, combine the eggs and milt. This skips natural spawning processes, upon which proper genetics, therefore, proper traits depend. One process is mate choice. Think of female skill in judging suitability of a male, and male skill and strength in getting spawning rights by competing with other males and impressing females. And does the female know how to choose the best place to bury her fertilized eggs (the redd site), a spot with best available gravel and through-flow of water? And is she good at competing against other females for it?

If the female doesn't measure up in one or more ways, fewer of her eggs or offspring will survive or properly develop than those of more capable females. That's natural culling of unfit genes. The unavoidable use of behaviorally defective trout in artificial spawning produces thousands of defective young. Those that survive and spawn pass defective genes into the wild population.

There's a recent review of how hatchery salmonids affect wild ones (McMillan & others, 2023). Studies reveal ill effects in just one generation of artificial spawning. Among many reports, one title sums it up: Genetic Effects of Captive Breeding Cause a Rapid, Cumulative Fitness Decline in the Wild (Araki & others, 2007).

In Wisconsin, the DNR "semi-wild" program often keeps two or three generations in the hatchery.

Besides genetic problems of breeding, there's "hatchery selection" in the rearing. The young that survive and thrive in the hatchery environment may not be those best suited for a natural stream environment.

In addition, such rearing prevents fish from developing right. Young trout can't learn the essentials of natural stream life when crowded and fighting equal-sized brethren for pelleted fodder in concrete or plastic containers—radically simpler than a stream, different as a jail cell is from normal human environment. During eons of natural selection, each trout species became closely adapted to the natural intricacies of streams and now depends on them.

For successful behavior, a trout's developing brain must undergo a vast set of experiences only the stream can offer. Some of this must proceed in step-by-step experiences. Consider the complexities of using channel structure, spatial character and water flow, while learning to recognize predation threats. Hiding cover, water depth, current patterns, foraging positions and other stream conditions matter in their variety.

There's misbehavior of hatchery trout within the wild trout social order (Bachman 1984). The chaos harms all fish involved, such as by greater chance of predation and investing energy in needless conflict rather than in feeding and growth. In a hatchery, trout can't learn social norms about how to "behave in public," so have disruptive personalities. Hatchery trout, no matter how good their genetics, just can't do things right. They're misfits.

The key point of all this: Any captive breeding and hatchery life block nature's culling of the unfit, so poor quality is unavoidable. It leads to lower populations and poorer fishing than wild trout provide.

But isn't stocking sometimes advisable? Yes, in some limited cases, such as to preserve species or genetic strains on the verge of extinction, or in the Great Lakes where we've driven native species extinct and otherwise disarrayed things by intro-

Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin, 1951

HIGHLY ERODED STREAMBANKS, CIRCA 1951

Wisconsin Historical Society

PAINTING OF NEVIN FISH HATCHERY IN MADISON

ducing exotics we can't eradicate, or where we see no other way to provide fishing in urban ponds and certain lakes.

For "put-and-take" fisheries in ponds and some streams, DNR uses 8-to-11-inch, broodstock-parented rainbow trout. Most soon die without being caught. And at what cost?

Tim Simonson, Southern District fisheries leader reports that in a recent study, "put-and-take" fishing in southern counties cost $8 per harvested trout.

The DNR often stocks "catchable" hatchery trout (mainly semi-wild ones but also domestic rainbow trout) in Class III streams: those able to sustain trout only part of the year. This may compensate a bit for human abuse that degrades habitat, but it masks the causative problems and removes incentive for curing them.

Where once-ruined stream habitat has recovered, it's better to transplant wild trout from another stream than to stock hatchery trout. DNR biologists began that in the late 1980s for restored Driftless Area creeks, and found tremendous success. Habitat self-renewal and transplanted wild trout formed the region's basis for its now-famous fishery.

Despite the drawbacks of hatcheries and stocking, DNR proceeds with them. In 2023 it used more than 30 percent of the $30.6 million fisheries budget to produce not only "inland trout," but also Great Lakes trout and salmon, walleyes, muskies, northern pike, sturgeon and bass. The Great Lakes and walleye share of the hatchery-and-stocking budget was 69 percent. A major part of the inland effort involves "catchable" trout, of which 753,991 were stocked for the 2023 season, including 208,632 brook trout, 299,447 brown trout and 245,932 rainbow trout. The brooks and browns were mostly for streams but some lakes and ponds, too. The rainbows were mostly for "put-and-take" stocking of ponds and lakes.

The DNR's Simonson reckons, however, that streams get about a third, many being an easy-to-catch "bonus" for a couple weeks in spring or downstream from the main wild trout populations.

Does the Driftless Area get too much?

TU Council Member Tom Lager analyzed DNR's 2023 "catchable" trout stocking and says the Driftless Area got more than its rightful share. It covers less than a third of the state (see map) and has 38 percent of the trout stream miles but got 71 percent of the stream-stocked "catchable" trout. This happened in a region swarming with wild trout. In some streams they are so overcrowded that they over-tax food supplies and have poor growth.

On average, Driftless Area counties have high density of Class I streams, when comparing stream miles per county land area. This is only a bit less than the other major trout regions, central and north. It's especially high in Richland, Crawford, and Vernon Counties (31 to 33 miles of Class 1 stream per 100 square miles), which is more than any central county but one, and all but five of the north.

"Where once-ruined stream habitat has recovered, it's better to transplant wild trout from another stream than to stock hatchery trout."

Driftless Area streams have improved tremendously. In 1951, Vernon County had only 18 trout streams, all surely with such bad habitat that they needed stocking. By 2002, it had 68 trout streams, 24 being Class I. Now it has 114 trout streams with 62 Class I streams and more streams ready to join that group.

On the other hand, five of the 22 Driftless Area counties have no Class I stream (Buffalo and La Fayette) or almost none (Pepin, Juneau, and Green). That's understandable at the south edge of Wisconsin's thermally suitable trout zone, but what's wrong in Buffalo and Pepin, further north? Adverse geology? Especially abusive farming? Quirky classifying by DNR?

Why does stocking persist so strongly in the wild-trout-rich Driftless? Let's consider the region's special characteristics and history.

The region has many Class II streams (trout reproduce poorly, so DNR stocks). Its counties average 18 miles of Class II channel per 100 square miles, compared with 16 in the north region and 7 in the central. Spawning has improved, however, in many Class II streams, so they can be changed to Class I and stocking halted. This spring, DNR biologist Kirk Olson submitted 15 streams to be classified or upgraded in his area and says many more could be eventually upgraded.

Consider also that the damage to the Driftless Area's streams from 1830-1970 the state's worst and most prolonged. Uphill-downhill tilling led to tremendous soil erosion. Overgrazed and compacted pastures caused fast runoff of water and severe gullying. Stream banks became mainly mud and stream beds mainly silt. The situation seemed hopeless, with hatchery trout as the only way to have fishing.

We didn't foresee that reduced pasturing would let habitat restore itself.

Although much healing has happened, the "fish planting" idea lives on. People who are unaware of wild trout abundance still want the handout.

There was also the problem of "cooperative trout rearing," a program that stopped this year. DNR would provide young hatchery trout to citizen groups that reared the fish for later stocking. After trout growth, DNR trucks transported the fish while club members helped with stocking, sometimes even in Class I streams. Of the 24 groups involved in 2023, 21 were in the Driftless Area. The system gave people a sense of engagement, engendering support for the DNR. There are better ways to do that, though. DNR's biologist for some southern counties studied the program there in the 1970s and found it a waste of time and money.

Unfounded tradition

From the 1870s until after World War II hatcheries and stocking composed most state effort to support recreational fishing. It was well-intentioned, but poorly grounded in science and economics. People thought "hatcheries are where fish come from," and if fishing isn't good enough, "just stock more." It took place according to political demand voiced in public "quota meetings" for each county, with the WCD warden presiding and citizens pressuring for fish stocking in their favorite waters.

Though the DNR now decides things on a more biological basis, it's still forced to do ill-advised stocking, harming wild trout genetically and by behavioral problems and disease. The program consumes funds needed for beneficial work, like protecting and restoring habitat, which has long-term benefits to trout populations, (Hunt 1988, Avery 2004), letting them become self-sustaining, and eliminating need for stocking.

At one time, an assistant fisheries chief long opposed habitat work, saying that DNR could stock hatchery trout in the stream for decades with what a habitat project costs,

Mid-Continent Railway Museum

FISH STOCKING RAILROAD CAR AT ANTIGO

Wisconsin Historical Society

FISH STOCKING RAILROAD CAR

Troy Zorn, Michigan DNR

BASED ON APPEARANCES ALONE, THERE IS NO COMPARING A HATCHERY BROOK TROUT TO A WILD ONE
On the left is the hideous "state fish" photo that Michigan's hatchery system submitted in the 1950s or so for illustrating the state highway map, It wasn't used. On the right is a wild brook trout photo taken by Michigan DNR biologist Troy Zorn. The author says that today the people who run hatcheries know the difference.

unaware that wild trout contrast sharply in quality from hatchery trout traits of dull color, deformed body, misbehavior, low survivability, etc.

A year ago, the Fisheries Bureau wanted to reduce inland trout stocking and proposed the idea to the top level. Fearful of criticism, the DNR Secretary (since resigned) simply said "no."

Fishery administrators who aren't trout fishers should be guided by biologists who are broadly experienced with trout angling, so are acquainted, and can empathize with a wide range of the trout fishing public. Should deer management be run by people who don't hunt deer?

Wildlife agencies long ago quit captive breeding and stocking of game animals (except put-and-take pheasants and last-resort rescue of endangered species). They and the public saw that it didn't work. But the unseen submerged fate of stocked fish lets publicly assumed success go on. Biologists gauge trout abundance in streams by electrofishing, but DNR's lack of money prevents enough of it. (See adjoining article.) Research in other states also shows that stocking isn't needed or effective. But the public, politicians and DNR's top command simply assume it works, so it continues.

Underlying causes

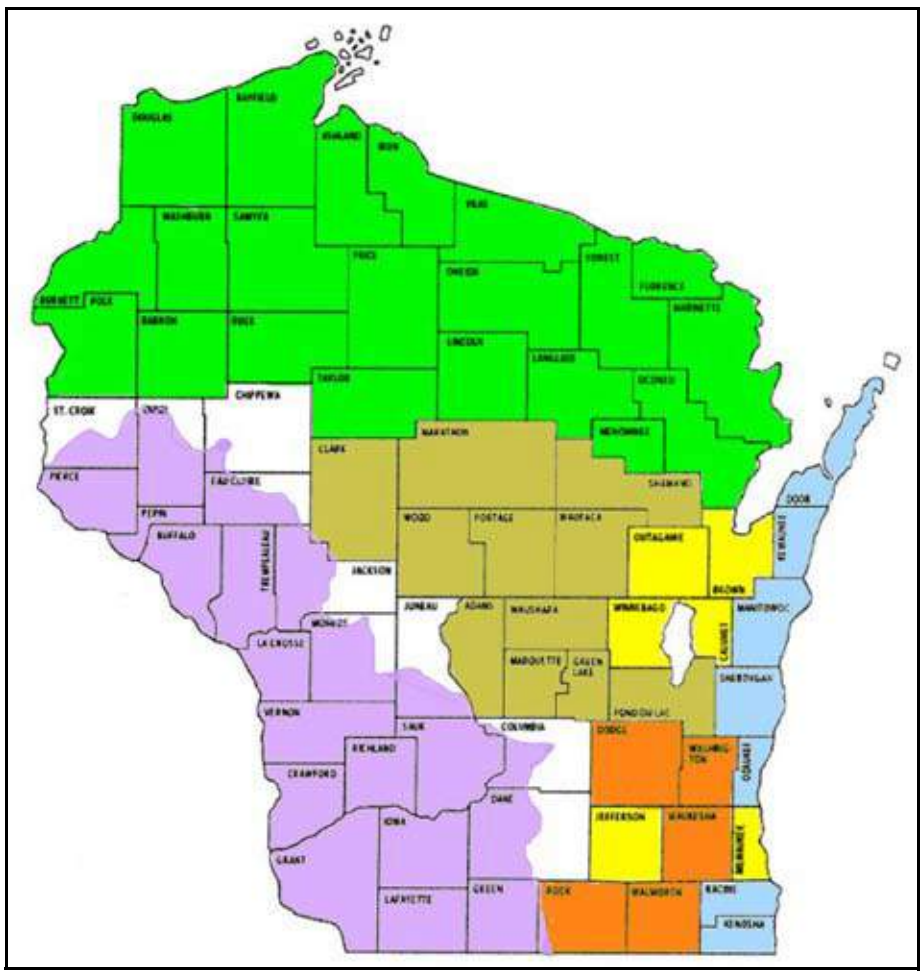
Most anglers can't detect that trout are abundant, even when thousands exist per stream mile. The majority don't know how to see them and don't catch them well enough to have that be an indication. Often anglers who catch no trout in a stream are astounded when an electrofishing crew turns up dozens of nice ones along just one or two bends.

When anglers don't catch trout and don't see them, many just think the stream has too few. This leads to demands for stocking even where there's evidence that it's not needed, like catches by more skillful anglers or electrofishing. Just as evidence-based medical practice is standard, fishery management should be evidence-based. That's the reason DNR examines trout populations by electrofishing "surveys." The budget crisis prevents doing enough of them.

Unneeded stocking can stem from simple, uninformed desire to provide for better fishing, but at least six other motivations, impulses or assumptions are at work. One is the agrarian mindset. The farmer in each of us thinks that to have harvest, we must plant, and that what we "culture" is better than what nature provides.

Then there's sheer greed, grasping the government give-away. Once, when some of us biologists inspected a creek, a landowner rushed out of his house. "When are you bringing my fish?" he asked. We didn't know, but the fellow went on to tell about the 1920s, 30s, and 40s when this stream was the favorite of the county's WCD warden. In those days, wardens got milk cans of trout from the train, took them to streams, and poured the fish in. That warden put the "quotas" for all county streams in this one stream.

Third: It's easy for those who run hatcheries to delude themselves. A 1922 news article quoted State Fish Commissioner B.O. Webster. "Propagation of fish in hatcheries," he said, "is called artificial. This is not so. There is nothing artificial about any of the methods that are employed...Every known natural method is put into practice and every fish culturist that wishes to make a success of his work gets down as close to nature in carrying out the work as possible." Such denial of reality persists in some of today's hatchery enthusiasts.



The regions referred to in this article: **green** = northern; **purple** = Driftless (approximate); **tan** = central; **blue** = lake shore; **orange** = south central; **yellow** = "non-trout" counties (have no trout stream or have no Class I or II stream). In counties that are part white, almost all "catchable" trout stocking is within the purple area.

Fourth: To protect certain interests, the legislature says, "Don't regulate polluters, developers, or others who harm streams. Just stock fish!" And it now weakens the DNR by starving it of funds.

Fifth, as said: some administrators know too little about science and trout fishing values and fear criticism if they halt stocking. They may have learned science in college or on the job, but none can know fishing values except by doing it—not just developing know-how but getting genuinely acquainted with streams, trout, fellow fishers and the spirit of the sport; having experience that makes one feel part of the stream's "biotic community," as Leopold put it.

Last, not least: political avarice for the "golden geese" that hatcheries can be. Creating and supporting them garners votes. We need to inform the public and politicians about the facts.

Comparing states

The Wisconsin state motto is "Forward!" But is our inland trout stocking in the forefront of Michigan, Minnesota and Montana, states that also have increasingly emphasized wild trout, protected and restored habitat, and reduced stocking? In 1964 Michigan stopped "catchable" trout stocking due to ill-effects on wild trout, poor aesthetics and sporting quality of hatchery fish, and poor benefit per cost. Those concerns were among the reasons TU was founded there in 1959 (Whelan 2004). In 1976 Montana halted stocking in all but three of its streams, instead devoting hatchery production to lakes and reservoirs.

Minnesota, with far less trout water than Michigan, Wisconsin or

Kirk Olson, DNR

NORTH FORK OF THE BAD AXE RIVER
In addition to well known streams like this one, last spring DNR biologist Kirk Olson submitted 15 streams to be classified or upgraded in his area and says more could be considered.

Kirk Olson, DNR

BROWN TROUT FROM THE NORTH FORK BAD AXE RIVER

Montana, and with its most productive streams in its southeast corner, has a program resembling Wisconsin's. However, Minnesota biologists have also studied the situation scientifically and therefore the state stocks with much more discretion based on trout population size, angling pressure, flooding and habitat condition (Thorn et al. 1997; MDNR 2013). Minnesota DNR's 1970s-80s surveys showed increased wild trout abundance and less need for stocked fish, so it reduced stocking of catchable brook trout and brown trout in streams by 56 percent and 62 percent, respectively and increased stocking of catchable rainbow trout in lakes by 78 percent (Thorn 1992).

Conclusion

Wisconsin's trout fishing is the best in living memory. There's angling for wild trout that thrive in thousands of beautiful streams recovered from 1830s-to-1970s devastation. The hopes that WCD (DNR) personnel held in the 1950s and 1960s have been fulfilled far beyond our expectations. Most people today don't know how bad streams and fishing used to be. The "good old days" are right now.

This happened where bank vegetation healed stream habitat after logging decreased and methods of farming and other activities improved, especially the 1970s-80s change away from pasturing. Plus, there's been plenty of habitat work by the DNR, TU and other public entities and private groups.

It happened also because DNR reduced stream stocking. Given improved habitat and relief from harm caused by hatchery fish, wild trout populations took off.

Problems remain, including climate warming, excessive streambank vegetation, water pollution from new kinds of farming, and huge legacies of destroyed headwater wetlands and stream channels ruined by log drives or straight ditched for farming. But wild trout now thrive so well that hatchery trout are seldom needed. The DNR can spend funds better by further protecting and restoring habitat for wild trout and high-quality fishing than by stocking synthetic trout for low-quality fishing.

Hatchery trout can't rival wild trout in beauty, suitable behavior and survivability, and not in sporting quality, either. DNR must face up to that. Now its fisheries staff wants to kick the trout hatchery habit. TU can help by educating legislators and others.

As we remember our first trout, let's remember one of TU's first purposes. During an evening's fishing on Michigan's Au Sable River in one of the slim boats he designed, TU co-founder George Griffith told me one reason the group got its 1959 start: to rid streams of hatchery trout.

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"George Griffith told me one reason the group (TU) got its 1959 start: to rid streams of hatchery trout."

Ray White, a founding member of Wisconsin TU, was born and raised in Madison. He eventually got out of there and has ranged widely in work and outdoor recreation. Now living near Seattle, Washington, he returns several times a year to a central Wisconsin cabin he bought in 1996-the one in this article's opening story.

After earning a B.A. in zoology at UW-Madison in 1957, he led research to evaluate trout habitat management for the Wisconsin Conservation Dept. While with WCD and DNR he got M.S. and Ph.D. degrees at the UW and spent several years at German and Austrian institutes. In 1967, he and O. M. Brynildson published DNR's "Guidelines for Management of Trout Stream Habitat in Wisconsin," which long served as a standard technical reference in the state and beyond.

He left the DNR in 1972 to continue research and teach fishery science at Michigan State and Montana State Universities. In semi-retirement, he keeps up to date on advances in stream and salmonid science. Each year since 2013 he has organized a Wisconsin workshop on stream restoration which features state and national experts as speakers.

Ray's favorite fishing has been for trout, of course; his favorite hunting, for Sharp-tailed Grouse. Decreased sure-footedness has meant putting rods and guns aside. Now he hunts birds with a camera. He and his wife travel worldwide for that.

COMMENTARY

DNR financial crisis strangles trout stream management

The DNR fisheries budget is strapped and the trout resource and fishing suffer.

By Ray J. White

Dominated by anti-conservation members, Wisconsin's legislature deliberately starves the DNR fisheries and wildlife arm by not letting user fees increase. The last increase for almost all license types was 19 years ago. The legislature also created reduced-fee licenses (first time buyer, youth, senior, etc.). The number of anglers (about 1.4 million) hasn't changed, nor has license income, so the budget's dollar amount has stayed about constant, but inflation has severely reduced the effective budget. The dollar now buys 59 percent less than in 2005, but aspects of the DNR fisheries program have risen much higher than that, like 364 percent for habitat rock.

A major result of the legislature-induced financial shortfall is that DNR employees leave to find jobs in other states or retire early. The Fisheries Bureau had 252 permanent personnel in 2006-07. Today it has 194.

Higher license fees and the trout stamp are long overdue for at least modest increases. Failing to protect the state's trout fishing quality is shameful. Let your legislator know.

DNR inland trout management budget specifics

- Last full license fee increase was in 2005.
- Inflation from 2005 to 2024 is 59 percent, but fishery management costs increased more.
- Typical stream habitat project cost $82,000 in 2006; now $190,000; 132 percent increase.
- Equipment costs are up 113 percent.
- Limited Term Employee costs are up 100 percent.
- Habitat materials such as rock are up 364 percent.
- Seeding and mulch material costs are up 463 percent.
- Fleet vehicle rates have increased much since 2007.
- Passenger car: $0.27/mile then; $0.62 now; 130 percent increase.
- Excavator: $31/hour then; $108/hour now; more than 300 percent increase.
- Off-road dump truck: $50/hour then; $108/hour now; about a 200 percent increase.
- 12 ton or less trailer: $42/month then; $135.50/month now; 223 percent increase.

Hatchery fish food increase since 2005

- Trout starter diet up from $21/bag to $104/bag, a 396 percent increase.
- Trout grower diet up from $14/bag to $38/bag, a 170 percent increase.
- Trout floating diet up from $13.75/bag to $30.78/bag, a 114 percent increase

What will your legacy be?

The Wisconsin State Council announces the creation of a new permanent endowment fund — entitled the Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited Fund.

The fund will be managed by Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Investment proceeds from this fund will either be accumulated within the fund or used by the Council to support our mission. Donations to this fund are tax-deductible.

The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)3 charitable organization that was formed in 1986 to protect Wisconsin's lands, waters and wildlife by providing conservation funding, partnerships and programming and by connecting people to nature. The foundation currently manages more than $10 million in 124 endowment funds to support their conservation mission.

You can donate to the Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited Fund by:

- A gift of cash
- A gift of appreciated securities
- A gift through a personal donor advised fund.
- By naming this fund as a beneficiary of your will, life insurance policy, IRA or retirement plan.
- Through a bequest, charitable gift annuity or a life-income fund.

More information on all of these options is available by contacting Marta Weldon, Director of Philanthropy at the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin at (608) 409-3112, or at Marta.Weldon@WisConservation.org.

Does your fishing car have a TU license plate yet?

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

Help on the way for Lake Superior communities

Flood-prone communities and partners in Lake Superior basin set to receive major NOAA investment to increase resilience to climate change.

WILSON CREEK ROAD CROSSING PROJECT

By: Jamie Vaughan, Great Lakes Engagement Coordinator

A coalition of partners in the Lake Superior basin have been awarded $1.45 million by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to increase climate resilience in communities hit hard by catastrophic, repetitive flooding.

Earlier this month, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo announced that the Department of Commerce and NOAA have recommended the funding of the project which encompasses the Lake Superior Basin region of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan. The awards are being made under the Biden Administration's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, a competitive, $575 million program funded through the Biden-Harris Administration's Inflation Reduction Act.

The region has endured six federal disaster declarations between 2012 and 2022, causing costly and hazardous road and culvert failures across state, local and tribally managed roads.

Failed roads are often restored to pre-storm conditions because the immediacy of the situation makes it hard to build back better. Proactively assessing and repairing the landscape's natural ability to manage floodwaters before disaster strikes helps communities better withstand future storms and reduce the costly and repetitive road repair burden.

The project, led by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and Wisconsin Wetlands Association, involves diverse partners including Trout Unlimited, Superior Rivers Watershed Association, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve and Superior Watershed Partnership, among others.

Collaborative stewardship is the name of the game at Trout Unlimited, and with more than 20 partners involved, this project exemplifies how cooperative partnerships give us a better chance of matching our efforts with the scope of the problems facing flood prone Midwest communities.

This project builds upon years of successful collaboration with communities, agencies, nonprofits, municipalities and landowners in Wisconsin Priority Waters to assess, prioritize and implement projects to reestablish the landscape's capacity to capture, store, infiltrate and slowly release runoff to prevent future flood damages.

"With climate change causing more extreme weather events and devastating flooding across our state, building flood resilience through high-impact, nature-based solutions to protect our communities and our natural resources is a top priority for us in Wisconsin," said Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers.

"I'm grateful to the Biden-Harris Administration and NOAA for their support in these efforts and to the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and our partners for developing a program that will make a lasting difference for folks affected by flooding and on our region's environmental footprint."

2016 ROAD FAILURE IN WISCONSIN

This game-changing investment will build local capacity to prioritize thoughtful watershed restoration that addresses root causes, like the loss of wetlands and floodplain connectivity, with innovative strategies rather than short-sighted quick fixes.

There is no such thing as light work in conservation, but when people come together and get to work, we can tackle even the most complex and insurmountable challenges facing America's rivers and streams, families and local communities.

ROAD MANAGERS, PARTNERS AT ROAD-STREAM CROSSING TOUR

TU members invited to Neonicitinoid Forum October 30 in Madison

TU members are invited to attend the Neonicotinoid Forum October 30 at the DeLuca Forum in the UW-Madison Institute for Discovery. This informative event is hosted by TU, Clean Wisconsin, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, the Black Earth Creek Watershed Association, Wisconsin's Green Fire, UW-Extension, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Neonicotinoids, or neonics, are the most widely used insecticides in Wisconsin, applied to millions of acres of agricultural and urban land each year. What benefits do they provide and what risks do they pose?

This informative event is thanks in part to a grant from the DNR Surface Water Grant Program to the Wisconsin Council of TU. The agenda is finalized, the Forum site has been selected and the registration site is now open.

The forum will feature national speakers and Wisconsin's own experts regarding neonics, their use and their potential impact on a wide range of species. There is a $40 registration fee to cover the cost of lunch and breaks, as the DNR grant will not cover these expenses.

Clean Wisconsin has graciously agreed to share their registration site on which you can register for the event. When purchasing a registration ticket, please select your ticket quantity and then click "Donate Via" using your preferred method. By clicking this option, paying $40, and entering your information, you will be fully registered for the conference.

Here is the website with the link to register for the Forum.

https://www.cleanwisconsin.org/support/events/wisconsin-neonic-forum/

There is also an advertisement in this issue of *Wisconsin Trout.*

The forum is limited to 300 attendees, so register as soon as you are able.

—Michael Williamson and Andy Morton- SWTU

TUDARE habitat restoration project update

It's been a busy summer in the Driftless Area. Several projects have been completed this summer and many more are in the works, with work still underway until winter.

It has been a busy summer for TU in the Driftless Area. Several projects have been completed this summer and many more are in the works, with work still underway until winter. The recently completed Wisconsin project was on Traverse Valley Creek. The Minnesota and Iowa projects are outlined below.

Mill Creek

This project in Chatfield, Minnesota will restore habitat in Mill Creek, along city and private property, just above the confluence with the North Branch of the Root River. The project extends from earlier habitat improvement work done by DNR and Minnesota TU and was a family tribute to their father, who had a strong conservation ethic. The section is nearly a half mile of stream and includes wood, riffles and pool habitat.

Mazeppa Creek

This nearly half-mile restoration site in Wabasha County, Minnesota included several rock weirs, lots of root wads, minor channel realignment and stabilization of a bluff toe. The project site will include a bioengineering treatment in the riparian zone that will be completed by volunteers next spring.

North Bear Creek

This project on one of Iowa's most popular trout streams has completed two phases. Work on the third section will begin in late September. In total, the restoration will improve habitat for more than 1.1 miles of stream, while addressing eroding streambanks and replacing invasive species with native species in the riparian corridor. The project has received contributions from as far as Nebraska and as near as the Decorah hatchery, where youth-built bird and bat boxes were constructed, and which will be installed after the project is completed.

RECONNECTED MEANDER ON MILL CREEK
This drone photo taken by TUDARE's Paul Krahn shows the reconnected meander on Minnesota's Mill Creek. This project in Chatfield, Minnesota will restore habitat in Mill Creek, along city and private property, just above the confluence with the North Branch of the Root River. The project extends from earlier habitat improvement work done by DNR and Minnesota TU and was a family tribute to their father, who had a strong conservation ethic. The section is nearly a half mile of stream and includes wood, riffles and pool habitat.

Patterson Creek

This project in the Upper Iowa River watershed in Allamakee County improved fish habitat, eroding streambanks and a stream crossing in a pasture setting along a popular fishing stretch. The project was completed in September and we're already talking with the landowner about the possibility of 1-2 more projects along the stream on his property.
—Sara Strasman, TUDARE

Oak Brook Chapter gives e-DNA demo

Last May members of the Oak Brook Chapter travelled to the Driftless Area for their annual fishing outing. In addition to their usual fishing and stewarding their section of highway near Viroqua, the magnanimous Dave Carlson also offered to give TUDARE a preview of the e-DNA sampling methods the chapter has recently deployed to take genetic samples.

The chapter's sampling approach is meant to help elucidate brook trout activity and history in Driftless Area watersheds. The approach can also shed light on the presence of other species of conservation interest for a slightly higher lab analysis cost.

E-DNA sampling at its most basic leverages existing DNA markers to discover DNA in a water sample that can be positively identified to a species or genus level. Being able to assess the presence of organisms from a simple water sample can be a rapid way to determine if a species is present without intensive sampling to capture the species.

In the case of brook trout sampling, it is ideal for watersheds where brook trout have never been confirmed by agency sampling or where it is unclear how far up in a watershed there is viable brook trout habitat.

The Oak Brook chapter purchased a peristaltic pump that filters a water sample without introducing water into machinery that could contaminate future samples. They record how much water is filtered and how long the filtering process took (15-30 minutes). They seal the filter into an individual bag and send it off to the Molecular Conservation Genetics Lab at UW-Stevens Point, where Jared Homola processes the sample for brook trout presence or a more comprehensive meta-barcoding analysis that identifies other species. Homola provided an excellent presentation on genetics at the 2024 Driftless Symposium that can be viewed through TU's YouTube channel.

TUDARE staff and friends met with Carlson on Harrison Creek, a stream that has only had brown trout captured in the past by DNR, but where anglers have reported brook trout. There is also a new easement with the DNR.

The group collected a sample and hoped to confirm brook trout presence. In early September, results were reported by the lab for brook trout DNA. Unfortunately, no evidence of brook trout DNA was found in the samples from Harrison Creek.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) is not a foolproof approach and may be sensitive to lower population sizes, so the lack of a positive ID from Harrison Creek does not rule out brook trout presence. The chapter is interested in sampling from known brook trout fisheries with a variety of population sizes to help refine the technique and analysis.

—TUDARE

Sara Strassman

GATHERING GENETIC SAMPLES FROM HARRISON CREEK
Dave Carlson from the Oak Brook Chapter installs the filter for the eDNA collection while demonstrating the chapter's newest monitoring tools.

Does your fishing car have a TU license plate yet?

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

Chapter News

Aldo Leopold Chapter

As our award for winning the grant contest from Stihl Corp. and TUDARE, Stihl sawyers joined us at one of our workdays. Also with the Stihl grant we were able to purchase a chainsaw, a power pole saw, blade trimmers and four safety kits that include helmets, chaps, etc.

A big thanks goes out to all who participated in our first annual sweepstakes for a custom-built bamboo rod from PJ Julius Rod Co. and a guided trip from The Driftless Angler.

A very special thanks also goes out to those who attended our June picnic, where we drew the winners for those two prizes, along with many bucket raffle prizes. We sold tickets to people from all over the state, and both winners came from other area chapters. Dan Pherson from the Southern Wisconsin Chapter won the bamboo rod and Mike Juran from Coulee TU won the trip. We plan to do it again next spring.

—Dan Endres

Antigo Chapter

We hope this fall brings beautiful colors. Trout fishing in September can be great. As usual, we find ourselves asking "What happened to summer?

It was our chapter's pleasure to help send two kids to the Council's Youth Fishing Camp this year again, as we all know they are the future of trout fishing and conservation.

We held a number of work days, including cleaning out our wasteline boxes that we had installed at various public access locations. We are now working with the city of Antigo to place these boxes at fishing piers and bridges on Antigo Pond, to help keep these areas clean of line and hooks. We hope to place them this fall.

Our biggest project this summer was the replacement of the fishing dock on the East branch of the Eau Claire River at State Highway 45 and County Highway C. We replaced the dock floor boards with composite material to lessen the maintenance. We made contact with the McNaughton Correctional Facility and they have a work crew that helped us with this project. We are very happy with the results and now the dock will be used for years to come.

We also cut grass and brush and repainted the signs at two parking lots we built with the DNR. We also cleaned out and put new shelves in our storage garage, and now it's much easier to access our equipment.

We're looking forward to the fall and winter to start planning our banquet, which will be held at the end of March 2025.

—Scott Henricks

Central Wisconsin Chapter

I can't believe it's fall already. The chapter board had a well-deserved rest while taking off June and July and are jumping right back into the upcoming chapter events.

In August the chapter had a welcome-back picnic for board and chapter members at John and Laura Tucker's house on the beautiful Pine River. We all enjoyed fried chicken with all the fixings and a wonderful time with everyone.

Even though we didn't conduct business meetings during the summer, it was business as usual for all our chapter members involved with water monitoring and workdays. The water monitoring group kept busy checking their 35 sites, recording data and keeping their important work on track.

Meanwhile, we had great turnout at our summer workdays and ended the summer with a bang. Our workday crew hosted the WITU Youth Camp campers and mentors on a fun-filled morning with DNR presentations, some stream work and a great lunch. This was no small task as the camp brought more than 40 people to the workday, and when you combine that with the normal 35-40 participants, it makes for a crazy day. But everyone did a great job and it went off with no problems. Thank you Chad, Mike, Laura and the rest of the volunteers who helped out.

We now resume offering presentation programs after our business meetings. In September Steve Heuser discussed fishing in New Zealand.

In October we will not have a business meeting because of our annual banquet. Then we have three more great presentations planned for everyone. These will be in November, March and April. Please check out our chapter website for more information on presenters and topics. All presentations will follow our business meetings.

We meet every second Wednesday of the month at the Fin-n-Feather in Winneconne. The business meetings start at 6:15 p.m., with presentations starting at 7:30 p.m. Thank you John Gremmer and his group for setting these up.

Please plan on joining us for our only fundraiser for the year, our Annual Conservation and Awards banquet. It will be Saturday, October 19 at the Oshkosh Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center in downtown Oshkosh. Doors will open at 4:30 p.m. More information about ticket prices can be found on our chapter website.

Do you find yourself with extra time on your hands? CWTU has openings on the board or on our committees if you are interested in becoming more involved with leadership or helping with our chapter activities. You need not be a board member to help with our committees. If interested, please contact me, Linn Beck, at 920-216-7408 or chlbeck@att.net.

—Linn Beck

Coulee Region Chapter

Event season for the Coulee Region Chapter is always busy, and this year has proved no exception, with the added twist of having to be agile as well.

In May chapter member Lauren Genske organized a fly-fishing clinic called "Red Robins on the Fly," alongside Craig Cook from Fall Line Outfitters, at the Antigo High School, home of the Red Robins.

The three-hour clinic began with a classroom presentation on the fundamentals of fly fishing in the Central Sands region, types of hatches, basic knot tying and what the weights and lengths of rods mean.

After the classroom, it was time to hit the gymnasium for some hands-on experience learning the proper fly-casting techniques using rods provided by Fall Line Outfitters.

The day ended with a casting competition with the winner receiving a new rod and reel. The instruction time and competition prize were donated by Fall Line and the participants donated $10 to go towards the TU organization "Veterans on the Fly."

The clinic was a great way to introduce newcomers to the sport of fly fishing and all were enthusiastic to get out on the streams and practice what they learned. A big thank you goes out to Craig Cook of Fall Line Outfitters in Stevens Point and to Lauren for putting together such a great event.

Our hallmark youth event in June is TroutFest, in Coon Valley. However, there are some perils to scheduling a day of fishing a year in advance and with Mother Nature being ever more temperamental about the weather. Weather during the week preceding the event contained forecasts for rain, flooding and lightening, and the forecasts were correct, which was not conducive to hosting an outdoor event.

So we decided to pivot to indoors, although the one thing that cannot pivot indoors is the actual fishing for trout. We persevered with the rest of our program including distributing 'I fished TroutFest with CRTU' tee-shirts (though not technically correct for this year), fly tying and temporary tattoos. Interestingly, the situation provided an opportunity for fishing stories to be shared and enjoyed.

In July, persistent flooding in La Crosse moved Outdoor Youth Fest to an alternate location where the

Lauren Genske

COULEE CHAPTER'S RED ROBINS PARTICIPANTS

Deb Muresan

SPORTING THE CRTU ANGRY TROUT LOGO

Patricia Fulton

CRTU'S BRAD BERGER WITH CURIOUS NEW FLY TYERS

Chapter News

booth space assignment for CRTU turned out to be an upgrade. In an improved traffic location, an estimated 100 families passed by our location for fly tying, rod casting lessons and general trout fun.

August featured our premier event as STREAMGirls was held in Avalanche at the West Fork Sports Club. Thank you to the club for the great facility and hospitality. Young ladies from the Girl Scouts of the USA – Badgerland, and other local participants, joined CRTU for a program to build confidence and explore science and the outdoors, plus make some art, some memories and have some fun.

Along with fly rod casting, fly tying, and creating a memory bracelet, the girls spent time in the stream learning entomology, stream flow calculations and environmental awareness. This is a rewarding day spent outdoors and interacting with future conservationists and anglers. The session ended with the earning of badges and certificates of completion, as well as 10 exhausted chapter volunteers.

September starts our membership engagement events season and we have a great slate of presentations, which started in September with John van Vliet, author of more than a dozen popular fly-fishing books including Trout Fishing in Southwest Wisconsin, Trout Fishing in Southeast Minnesota, Trout Fishing in Northeast Iowa and The Art of Fly Tying. An avid fly angler, writer, and filmmaker, he has fly fished around the world and the trout streams of the Driftless are his home waters.

On October 16 we will hear from DNR Fisheries Biologist Justin Haglund regarding the Mill Creek Restoration project.

On November 20 the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse Aquatic Ecology and Management Club will host a student presentation on campus. Visit our web site at www.coulleeregiontu.org to find out more, and join us if you can.

—Deb Muresan

Doug Nelson

TU'S FAVORITE BUG EXPERT AT THE WITU YOUTH FISHING CAMP
Tom Lager from the Fox Valley Chapter helped campers with bug identification at the 2024 youth fishing camp.

Fox Valley Chapter

Life is a constant series of opportunities, and Fox Valley Chapter Board grasped opportunities to lead our chapter members toward the ultimate goal of conserving the coldwater resources of our area. Board members took the lead in organizing, participating and developing new opportunities for our members.

Doug Nelson has taken on the challenge of reinventing our Cabin Fever Day next January18 at a new site, Tanners Grill and Bar in Kimberly. FVTU will return to an expo-type of event and we anticipate having about 30 vendors. We'll still feature great bucket raffles and some attractive items on the silent auction. Reduced ticket prices are significantly less than last year and are already available when you purchase them online. Also this year we will have tickets available at the door.

Nate Ratliff and Doug Nelson planned our Autumn Angling Adventure in Michigan's U.P. at the end of September. Many members stayed at campgrounds in Iron River, Michigan. The adventure followed our meeting that featured Seth Waters from the Dark Waters Fly Shop in Iron River. The rest of the week we enjoyed great fishing and comradery.

One of our senior members, Joe Bach, was honored as a Lake Michigan Champion of Conservation for his outstanding work on Stony Brook near Chilton. Joe secured funding for a Trout In the Classroom program in the Chilton Schools. For more than 15 years Joe was a Water Action Volunteer, monitoring Stony Brook. Recently he was involved in forming "Friends of Stony Brook" to help with funding and educating people about the only trout stream in Calumet County. Joe deserves this award for all the effort he put into a showcase trout stream in the Lake Michigan watershed.

Jerome Herro worked with CWTU chapter to bring our members to our work days, which we call "conservation days," on the third Saturday from May through September. Through these projects our members realize to know a river is to experience it, touch it, wade in it and contemplate it. We are grateful to the Central Wisconsin Chapter for the opportunity to work side by side with them on projects in the Central Sands region of Wisconsin. There are no trout streams in our chapter area and we are glad to be a part of the workforce on these stream projects.

Jerome is also in charge of hosting an end-of-the-season picnic at Bird Creek Park in Wautoma on October 12. This event is our way of saying thanks to the Central Wisconsin Chapter and the DNR employees who we worked with all summer. Join us for lunch from noon to 1:30 p.m. and fish before or after lunch.

Many of our members participated in this year's WITU Youth Fishing Camp. This year five youngsters applied for our camp scholarship. Because of some late withdrawals and other openings, three of them were able to attend. Ashton Wagner, Finn Modder and Owen Nelson joined 17 other youth at the camp.

Members Dennis Johnson and Tony Pudlo served as mentors at the camp. Grant Gabby, our camper from last year, helped the campers as a junior mentor. Tom Lager brought his expertise about bugs to the youth in a hands-on experience. Jim Oates from our board assisted in fly casting and Doug Nelson served as a camp photographer, visually documenting the camp life.

Norm Christnacht from our board arranged for the opening of an online store so our members can get hats and other wear with our logo right from the source. The prices provided are reasonable and we get to show the world our great logo.

Starting in October our regular chapter meetings will be at Holiday's in Appleton. The Team of John Barkmeier, Jason Bougie and Chris Firkis already set up interesting speakers for our meetings in October and November. We plan a special meeting in December and Jim Oates, Bruce Pennings and Jeff Moreau are working on the details now.

Despite not having any trout water in area, we are working hard to protect resources nearly an hour's drive away. Our members and board understand why we joined TU. Whether it was to learn about fishing or just to meet fellow anglers, we are all dedicated to conserving the coldwater resources near us.

—Tony Pudlo

Green Bay Chapter

During the past few months we've been part of a couple of youth educational events. In June we were at the Outagamie County Conservation Club's (OCCC) Take-a-Kid-Fishing Day, for the seventh year in a row. Despite the rainy weather, several hundred youth came out to enjoy the day. We had a booth and taught fly tying and fly casting.

In July we held our Kid's Fishing Day at the Brown County Izaak Walton League ponds. This unique event is an opportunity for disadvantaged youth to learn and practice fishing and enjoy a picnic meal with their families and volunteer mentors.

More than 30 kids and 30 adult mentors turned out, catching bluegill, bass and perch. In between the fishing, our guests enjoyed a picnic dinner supplied by the Green Bay Exchange Club. The Brown County

Doug Nelson

MULTI-GENERATIONAL FOX VALLEY CHAPTER WORK DAY
Tom Pieper and his grandson at a recent Fox Valley Chapter habitat day.

Adrian Meseberg

WAUPEE CREEK BRUSH DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST THIS CREW
Waupee Creek workday volunteers from the Green Bay, Oconto River and Marinette chapters, along with DNR personnel.

Chapter News

Adrian Meseberg

WAUPEE CREEK WORK DAY CREW MAKING A DIFFERENCE
Green Bay Chapter's John Duechert and Steve Walker working with DNR's Brent Ritter on Waupee Creek.

Adrian Meseberg

NO SHORTAGE OF SMILES AT THIS YEAR'S GBTU KIDS FISHING DAY
Green Bay Chapter volunteer Dave Sladek helps at GBTU's Kids Fishing Day.

Adrian Meseberg

THESE GBTU VOLUNTEERS MADE KID'S FISHING DAY A HUGE SUCCESS.

Health and Human Services' PALS program and Green Bay Exchange Club have been instrumental in making this day a huge success for many years. GBTU has been a part of Kids Fishing Day for more than 30 years. In addition to these incredible youth events, we also sponsored three youth at the WITU Youth Fishing Camp.

In June 16 volunteers representing the Green Bay, Oconto River and Marinette chapters joined DNR staff for in-stream and angler trail fishability brushing on Waupee Creek.

Also in June we partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to continue fishability brushing from an earlier workday. Together we cleared an additional 1,500 feet of stream and shoreline. Finally, on an August Saturday 11 volunteers from the Green Bay, Oconto River, Wolf River and Antigo chapters joined the DNR to install brush bundles on Long Creek.

These bundles are unlike many others, as they are made from old Christmas trees compacted by what is known as a "Christmas tree bundler." This makes the bundles easier to transport and install into the stream banks. Once the bundles are secured along the shoreline, they will collect sediment and eventually become part of the stream bank. The purpose of brush bundling is to narrow the waterway. The water through here flows faster, this helps wash away sediment from the bottom. The stream is ultimately deepened as well.

After more than three years, countless meeting, numerous workdays, wonderful donors, a pandemic and a lot of perseverance, we completed revamping of our Trout "Tails" Educational Trail. The project has generated National TU attention and was even partly funded by an international grant from Germany. A separate article in this issue of Wisconsin Trout provides more details about this project.

We continue to run our Veteran's Service Program at First Presbyterian Church in De Pere, where we meet to learn fly-tying and socialize every other Monday starting at 4:30 p.m. In the summer months we take veterans on fishing outings. 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. All experience levels are welcome. If you have never tied a fly, or been fly-fishing, this is a very good opportunity to see if this is something you would like.

For more 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

Nohr's 2024 stream work on the Blue River is about half done. The Blue River is a class II trout stream in Grant and Iowa counties. The 2024 work will be done in Iowa County on the Straka property in Eden Township near Montfort. The Blue River is specifically named and codified as an Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) and this property has a DNR fishing easement.

Work will be done on about a mile of stream and include shaping of stream banks and adding root wads, backwater ponds and vortex weirs. Funding comes from the Nohr Chapter, NRCS, a DNR Surface Water Grant, a grant from the Council, donations from other TU chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois, and donations from some other individuals and organizations. The donations from other chapters and other individuals and organizations are critical in getting the DNR Surface Water grant. We should be finished by the end of the season.

We have a work day along Big Spring Creek on October 19. The last time out we had a phenomenal turnout of chapter members, a couple of Iowa members and a gang from the Southern Wisconsin Chapter. With all that help, we cleared a tremendous amount of willows.

We have two in-fence stiles on Gordon Creek and one on Borah Creek to be installed. We're awaiting cooler days for the Gordon Creek stile, and we're awaiting contact with the landowner on Borah Creek, but will eventually put in a step-over ladder-type stile if we cannot make contact.

Our September board meeting was at the Landowner and Member Appreciation Picnic at the end of September at the Bowers Road crossing of the Blue River. We invited the members from the Southern Wisconsin and the Elliott Donnelly Chapters. Our October board meeting will be a joint meeting with the Coulee Region Chapter, and held in Richland Center.
—Brian Larson

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter

We kicked off our meeting schedule in September with an open house and gear swap at Rush River Brewing in River Falls. This event also featured a farmers market, food and music. We also signed up new members at half off the usual price.

In July James Patterson, Dan Wilcox, Chip Robinson, Tom Anderson and Randy Arnold assisted the DNR crew with seeding and mulching of the newest restored 2,700-foot section of Parker Creek in Saint Croix County. Randy Arnold, along with the DNR's Josh Kucko, installed two 'kissing gate' angler access stiles Randy had designed and constructed at the Gutting easement on the Trimbelle River. This was a boon to elderly chapter members who had requested a better way to access this site.

Later in July and August Ben Toppel, Chip Robinson, Rainbow Barry and Tom Anderson assisted DNR Area Fish Manager Kasey Yallaly and her crew with their shocking survey on the Rush River. Additionally, Mathew Chaplinsky, Tom Anderson, David Brockway and Brent O'Hara helped out with the population survey on the Kinnickinnic River. In August Jeff Dahl,

Brock Badger Flowers

DNR'S KASEY YALLALY WITH A NICE RUSH RIVER BROWN

Chapter News

Randy Arnold

"KISSING GATE" ANGLER ACCESS STILE ON THE TRIMBELLE RIVER

Randy Arnold

KIAP-TU-WISH CHAPTER'S PARKER CREEK MULCHING CREW
Chapter volunteers Dan Wilcox, Nate Anderson, James Patterson and Chip Robinson, along with DNR employees Josh Kucko and Rick W.

Tom Anderson, Dave Gregg and Randy Arnold assisted the DNR crew with seeding and mulching the new Martin easement on Plum Creek upstream of the Von Holtum easement in Pierce County.

In early September we again participated in the Pheasants Forever Youth Field Day at the Game Unlimited Hunt Club in Hudson. Participants learned to tie a fly, basics of fly casting and casting for fish at the club's lake. There was a drawing at day's end for two prizes provided by the chapter. The rod and reel combo were won by Merrick Fouks, and a fishing hat with the Kiap TU Wish logo was won by his brother Bryce Fouks. Chapter members participating were Randy Arnold, Loren Haas, Jeff Himes, Chip Robinson, Ed Constantini, Bob Diesch, John Skelton, Dan Donahue, Sally Noll, Tom Anderson and Cary Wood.

—Gary Horvath

Lakeshore Chapter

Greetings from the shores of Lake Michigan. Another summer is in the books and the Lakeshore Chapter was an active and visible presence in the conservation arena.

We began the summer by participating in the Sheboygan Falls Outdoor Activity Day, sponsored by the Sheboygan County Conservation Association and supported by many local outdoor clubs. This event features free fishing for stocked trout in the Sheboygan Falls lagoon. Hundreds of kids and their families attended the event, which featured a variety of outdoor sporting activities. Chapter volunteers helped with event setup and had a booth with fly-casting demonstrations and a fly rod raffle. The weather was a bit soggy this year but the kids and families had a great time.

Al Wortz

LAKESHORE CHAPTER'S JUNE WORKDAY CREW

Al Wortz

LAKESHORE CHAPTER'S STREAM CAMP CREATED PLENTY OF SMILES
This youngster caught his first fish on a fly rod at STREAM Camp.

Al Wortz

LAKESHORE CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS AND STREAM CAMP KIDS
LSTU volunteers Wendy Lutzke, Miles Thompson, Laurie Mosher- Paulin with the STREAM Camp kids.

Our conservation work on the Onion River is an endless labor of love. As the DNR Adopt-a-Wildlife Area (AWA) custodian of the Onion River public fishing area, we continue to pour our hearts, souls and sweat into maintaining this beautiful stream. We held monthly work days throughout the summer.

Through August, we had held eight organized weekend work days and four weekday "streamers" workdays in the Onion River public fishing area. During those organized events we had 50 different individual volunteers work a total of 430 hours.

Our members also did significant work outside of the actual work days in preparation for the workdays themselves. While some of our plans were negatively impacted by heavy June rains, our monthly work remains critical to maintaining the Onion River as one of the finest trout fishing destinations in eastern Wisconsin.

Ash trees ravaged by ash borer continue to fall into the river and across access trails. Without our efforts the Onion River would be completely inaccessible. A big thank you goes out to our partners in the DNR, our financial sponsors and especially everyone who volunteered their time and hard work.

Our workdays are held on the second Saturday of the month, except November. You can email me at alwortz@gmail.com for details or visit our Facebook page.

We are now leading the Water Action Volunteer (WAV) program for Sheboygan County. Following our training session in May, we began monitoring in June on five area rivers and streams. Five teams are monitoring temperature, turbidity, flow, dissolved oxygen, macroinvertebrates and invasive species on local waters of the Pigeon River, Sheboygan River, Onion River, Mill Creek and Ben Nutt Creek. So far the program is going great and the 10 monitoring volunteers are enjoying the work.

Our second annual Camp YKODA STREAM Camp was in August. with 14 boys and girls ages 11 to 13. Utilizing the TU curriculum, slightly modified to fit the day-camp schedule, our volunteers brought a fun outdoor adventure and learning experience to this group of kids. We did a stream walk and survey, macroinvertebrate collecting and classification, oxygen and transparency testing, fly casting, fly tying and catching bluegills on the fly. The weather was great and all involved had a fantastic experience. A huge thank you goes out to the 10 members who contributed about 80 hours to provide this unique experience to these kids.

—Al Wortz

Chapter News

Marinette County Chapter

The Marinette County Chapter had a very successful banquet in April and we've been able to meet all of the financial obligations for summer work projects this year. We had some volunteers help on work projects on the Waupee River and are in the process of getting our monthly meetings going again.
—Dale Lange

Oconto River Chapter

We've only awarded one college scholarship since 2018, due mainly to a lack of applicants. This year we received three applications all worthy of winning the award. Rather than trying to determine the best of three, the membership at the May meeting voted to award a scholarship to each applicant. Receiving $1,000 scholarships were Devin Bort of Coleman, Ashley Muench of Fond du Lac and Emma Anderson of Gillett. Here are some of the things they shared with us on their applications:

Devin Bort: "I grew up loving the outdoors, especially fishing, but I also enjoy hunting waterfowl and basically anything else outdoors. I am currently pursuing a degree in fisheries management at UW—Stevens Point. I am currently working for the DNR out of the Peshtigo office as a fisheries technician. After completing my undergraduate degree, I want to move back to northeast Wisconsin and secure a full-time position as a fisheries technician, and continue to manage the waters I grew up fishing in."

Ashley Muench: "Growing up, fishing with my dad on Lake Winnebago was enjoyable. However, my love for the outdoors deepened when I was exploring my interests through an associate's degree of arts and science and volunteering with the Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance. It was enough to steer me towards an environment/conservation career path versus the medical.

I am now a senior at the UW—Green Bay, pursuing a major in environmental science and a minor in environmental engineering technology. Currently, I'm a research assistant and lead data analyst with Lakeshore Water Institute and a water quality intern with Glacial Lakes Conservancy.

In the future, I aim to work with the DNR or other organization, working on studying, protecting and maintaining freshwater bodies, streams and habitats in both field and lab settings. Between these positions and my volunteer experience, my love for the outdoors continues to grow every day.

Emma Anderson, UW—Stevens Point and seeking a bachelor of conservation with a minor in soil science. "I enjoy the outdoors and am very active in it. I worked as coordinator at Chute Pond Oconto County Park and watercraft inspector for Clean Boats Clean Waters. I was also involved with Adopt a Wildlife Area by removing brush and invasive plants to provide a better area for wildlife habitat. The most interesting projects were doing Presidential Understudy work for the Soil and Water Conservation Society."

Once again, the Life Sports class from Gillett High School, was treated to an introductory fishing segment and learned the art of fly casting. Wayne Cypinski and Dave Kalous from the Oconto River Chapter provided the instruction and guidance to some very interested young people.

Then they visited Wocking's Pond to practice their fishing skills. Even though a steady rain began falling, the kids fished on until many of them were soaked. Fishing was very important to them. Nearly all caught at least one fish. Bluegills were the dominant target, although several bass and even trout were landed. All fish were released to fight again. Those with the largest fish of each species received a fishing lure as a prize.

A foreign exchange student was invited to participate. She had never fished in her homeland of Spain. With her beginner's luck she caught a 17-inch largemouth bass, the largest fish of the day.

Thank you to our members who helped out, the Wockings, for hosting the outing and to our friends at Gillett High School for making it happen.
—Tom Klatt

Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter

Our meetings took a summer hiatus, but we've been busy with a variety of fun and worthwhile activities.

Our June habitat workday at Scuppernong Springs included more than 20 volunteers who helped continue ongoing instream restoration. The chapter has been performing habitat work for more than 10 years here, turning this once-degraded little spring creek into a brook trout gem. This work session saw the installation of more biologs and more bank work to stabilize this spring-fed watercourse. Every workday gets us closer to finishing this restoration.

Our fly-casting volunteers continued their efforts, helping with the Orvis 101 learn-to-fly fish sessions at Orvis's Bayshore store with the final session of the summer season wrapping up in July. Many thanks to those members who helped. Attendees are also newly minted TU members. We even had a couple of this summer's 101 graduates attend our chapter's casting clinic and some even ventured into the Driftless Area for our weekend of mentored and social fishing at the West Fork Sports Club in August.

Speaking of fly-casting, SEWTU sponsored an evening of fly-fishing instruction and skills coaching at our annual casting clinic at Greenfield Park in West Allis in late July. It was capped off with the chapter's famous brat fry, and was a great opportunity for members and new folks to get together and brush up on their casting skills. Many thanks to Stan Strelka, Ken Rizzo and Joe Schroeder for all their work in putting on a successful evening event.

August featured our "Mentored and Social Fishing Weekend." The event officially started on Saturday morning with the pairing of mentors and mentees who fanned out throughout the area's streams.

While the unstable weather, complicated by on and off rain, slowed the fishing, our spirits were undampened and almost every group caught and released at least a few trout.

The group included SEWTU members who had not attended a chapter event in several years, new members who participated in the Orvis 101 class, and new members attending their first chapter event. Some attendees experienced the Driftless Area for the first time and were amazed by its unique physical attributes and large numbers of streams. Our group totaled around 20, with participants ranging in age from 25 to more than 80 and it sure seemed that everyone had a great time. Special thanks to those who gave up valuable weekend fishing time to help new members learn about Driftless Area trout fishing.

The social highlight was the "bring your own meat" cookout on Saturday evening which also featured some Wisconsin charcuterie boards, Dutch-oven cowboy beans, grilled snacks and an ever-expanding Dutch-oven peach cobbler.

The IF4 Fly Fishing Filmfest was late last month at the Bavarian Bierhaus in Glendale. It featured an Old Town fishing kayak as a grand door prize, along with bucket raffles and silent auctions for guided trips, fly rod and reel packages and other surprises.

Our monthly chapter meetings and our upcoming fall habitat workdays will keep us all busy into 2025.
—Rick Larkin

Southern Wisconsin Chapter

It was a pleasant and productive summer for SWTU and we're gearing up for a busy fall.

At our annual meeting we welcomed Riley Bellin and Joshua Reilly to our board. We would also like to extend our appreciation to departing board members Kevin Maes and Tom Thrall. Their ideas, energy and expertise made a big difference.

Our leadership was particularly focused on activities around Badger Mill Creek, a fine coldwater stream threatened by potential actions that could dramatically reduce its flow. We will remain engaged in all conversations about Badger Mill Creek, and we'll be partnering with local conservation organizations to protect the stream. If you'd like to learn more, visit swtu.org.

Jim Hess has once again assembled an amazing array of fall stream workdays. Our Stream Team will be gathering on a wide variety of waters to cut, haul, stack, plant, laugh, snack and just generally have a good time while making a difference for our coldwater resources. We'd love for you to join us. You can find dates and details for all of our workdays at swtu.org.

We meet the second Tuesday of every month at Schwoegler's Bowling Lanes in Madison. We started the fall season with the reintroduction of the annual Meicher Madness Auction, which was on hold since the pandemic. It was a room packed with donated gear, long-time members, new members and prospective members. An amazing array of outdoor items found new homes, friendships were kindled and a sizable sum was raised for our precious coldwater resources. We're looking forward to a great slate of upcoming meetings, so visit our website for details and please feel free to join us.
—Drew Kasel

Wisconsin DNR

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN CHAPTER'S TREES ARE REACHING NEW HEIGHTS
This swamp white oak at the Willow Creek restoration was planted by SWTU volunteers and the DNR in 2023 (left) and the same tree a year later.

Wild Rivers Chapter

In July we held a fly casting clinic at Silverthorn Park, near Seeley. We are lucky to have Larry Mann and Wendy Williamson in our chapter. They are great fly fishing instructors with years of teaching experience.

In August chapter members teamed up with the Great Lakes TU staff and the DNR to plant 1,000 tamarack trees along the South Fork of the White River in Bayfield County. Our chapter and the DNR have been working along the South Fork for years, removing buckthorn and planting new trees. Thank you to Great Lakes TU for supplying the tamarack trees and the box lunches.

I went back with the DNR's Nate Thomas to remove some of the alder trees that have fallen into the South Fork, causing sediment to build up. We were selective in cutting alders, since the trees also provide important shade and protection for the brown and brook trout.

In August, chapter members

Chapter News

John Simonson

TREE DRAGGIN' ON THE UPPER NAMEKAGON RIVER
Wild Rivers Chapter volunteers, alsong with DNR and U.S. Forest Service staffers, worked on the Namekagon above Randysek Road bridge.

John Simonson

TEACHING THE ART OF THE CAST
Wendy Williamson teaching a young boy fly casting at the Brule Hatchery Family Fun Day.

joined DNR fisheries biologist Max Wolter from Hayward, Brule DNR staff and U.S. Forest Service volunteers to place cut trees in six different locations along the Upper Namekagon River. Dragging cut oak and maple trees both upstream and downstream in a rocky river was no easy task. The trees will provide new trout habitat for both brook and brown trout. See the WRTU Chapter's Facebook page for some videos and photos of the Namekagon River habitat project.

Also in August chapter members participated in the Brule Hatchery Family Fun Day. Besides a chapter donation of $500 to help support the event, some chapter members taught kids to tie flies, while chapter members Larry Mann and Wendy Williamson gave fly-casting instructions to more than 20 of the attendees. Larry and Wendy were also busy in August with the 3rd Women's River of Recovery trip of women veterans.

Looking ahead, we'll remove more buckthorn this fall on the South Fork of the White River.

Also, come join us for our annual Brule River gathering this fall.

Frank Pratt helped us apply for a National TU Embrace-A-Stream grant.

I am also looking into applying for two Adopt-a-State-Fishery-Area grants, one for the Clam River State Fishery Area in Burnett County and one for the state fishery area along the South Fork of the White River in Bayfield County. I got the idea from the Lakeshore Chapter which has adopted the state fishery area along the Onion River in Sheboygan County.

—John Simonson

CHECKING IN ON THEIR TREE PLANTINGS
Wisconsin Clearwaters Chapter volunteers were able to find some of the taller swamp white oaks, which showed good survival.

Wisconsin Clear Waters

While most of us enjoyed a pleasant Wisconsin summer, one dedicated stream-clearing crew in western Wisconsin spent nearly two months working seven days a week to clear invasive reeds and willows from the Gilbert Creek Restoration Project site in Dunn County. This was the Clear Waters Chapter's second trial contracting with "Goatscapes" to use goats to clear persistent invasive plants from stream riparian areas.

Frequent June rains briefly postponed the release of the goats into a section along Gilbert Creek, which was bounded by temporary fencing. Once released, the goats enthusiastically jumped into their work, chomping away at the invasive willows and reeds choking the site. Again during this trial it was observed that the goats selected first the more robust invasive plants targeted for removal. By monitoring the site and determining when the goats had exhausted the supply of invasive plants, and then removing the goats before they began to graze heavily on the remaining native plants, a selective invasive plan removal was largely achieved. These workers did not complain a bit about the massive swarms of mosquitos produced by the generous early summer rains this year.

A late summer visit to the McCann Creek area in Chippewa County showed promising results from earlier work. After two winters of intensive brushing, and replanting with swamp white oak, black spruce, hackberry, tamarack and white cedar, we saw encouraging results and healthy young trees. They weren't all necessarily easy to find, as late summer grasses had grown taller than many of the young trees. But they seemed to be holding their own down in the cool, shady depths.

—Bob Mitchell

John Simonson

WISCONSIN RIVER VALLEY YOUTH DAY FLY TYING

Wisconsin River Valley Chapter

In July we had a workday with the DNR's Taylor Curran and his crew to do some brush cutting on a small unnamed tributary of Spring Creek. It was hot, but working in the stream was refreshing. Thank you to John Meachen for the yummy sloppy joe sandwiches and making sure everyone stayed hydrated. Thank you, Perry Nikolai, for your work in putting the workday together. Many thanks to the DNR crew and all the volunteers who created a lot of brush bundles.

Also in August I attended the WITU Youth Fishing Camp, at which our chapter sponsored two of the 20 campers, Ren Oostdik and Wil Detert. I was happy to be able to mentor Samuel Jensen. Besides fishing, he likes to work with wood and is learning to play the harmonica. Our fishing was cut a bit short Saturday evening when we were drenched by a passing raincloud.

Late August was Outdoor Heritage Day at the Wausau School Forest. We tied flies with kids in the morning and taught fly casting in the afternoon. Thank you to John Meachen, Bob Paine, Alan Hauber and Jason Linzmaier for their help. It is always a big thrill to see kids that come back for multiple years to pay a visit on Heritage Day. Dexter, it was great to see you.

In September was our Chapter Members & Friends Thank You Gathering at Sconni's Alehouse. Thank you to those who attended for a look ahead at the 2024-2025 season. The event included an introduction and the election of seven new chapter board members and officers. President-Eric Pease, Vice President-Perry Nikolai, Secretary-Linda Lehman, Treasurer-Kirk Stark. Our board members are Patrick Esselman, Al Hauber, Robert Pils, Nate Gruber, John Meachen, Doug Stubbe, Jeff Vanden Heuvel, David Carriveau, Jason Fremming, Jason Linzmaier and Jim Slayton. A huge thanks go out to John Meachen for all his time and work as president.

- October 8 is a presentation entitled "Selectivity in Trout" by Henry Kanemoto at the Sawmill Brewery in Merrill.
- October 15 is the first of many Hackle and Hops, Open Fly & Jig Tying at Sawmill Brewing from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. This takes place on the third Tuesday of the month from October through April. Come and tie some flies, or share a joke or a story. Sawmill also makes a tasty non-alcoholic smores stout.
- November 12 – Presentation entitled "Catskills Etcetera" by Terry Cummings at Sconni's Alehouse & Eatery in Wausau. The Catskills are considered by some as the birthplace of American fly-fishing. We'll travel with Terry as he explores the Catskills region of New York and what it has to offer.
- November 19: Hackle and Hops, Open Fly & Jig Tying at Sawmill

Chapter News

WRVU TAUGHT CASTING AT OUTDOOR HERITAGE DAY IN WAUSAU

Brewing from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

- December 10 is a presentation at the Sawmill Brewery entitled "Fishing the Upper Peninsula" by Seth Waters of Dark Waters Fly Shop in Ironwood, Michigan.
- December 17: Hackle and Hops, Open Fly & Jig Tying at Sawmill Brewing from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- January 14 - DNR Night with the Antigo and Wausau DNR fisheries specialists Sconni's Alehouse & Eatery in Wausau.
- January 21: Hackle and Hops, Open Fly & Jig Tying at Sawmill Brewing from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- February: Undetermined date. International Fly Fishing Film Tour (IF4)
- February 18: Hackle and Hops, Open Fly & Jig Tying at Sawmill Brewing from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- March 11: Presentation entitled "Hexteria - Fishing the Hex Hatch in North Central Wisconsin" by John Meachen at the Sawmill Brewery in Merrill.
- March 18: Hackle and Hops, Open Fly & Jig Tying at Sawmill Brewing from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- April 8: Presentation entitled "Gearing Up for the 2025 Season" by Craig Cook of Fall Line Outfitters in Stevens Point. Held at Sconni's Alehouse & Eatery in Wausau.
- April 15: The last Hackle and Hops, Open Fly & Jig Tying of the season at Sawmill Brewing from 6 p.m. p.m.
- May 13: Presentation on "Teaching New Trout Fishers, the Easy Way - Spin-casting with Dallas Moe" at the Sawmill Brewery in Merrill.

Changes do happen occasionally, so please make sure to check the monthly E-newsletter "The Riffle" or find us on Facebook at "Wisconsin River Valley Trout Unlimited."

Enjoy those fall colors.

—Linda Lehman

Wolf River Chapter

Greetings to all from the Wolf River Chapter. We have completed a project that has been ongoing for two years.

The first collective workday in the water was in July, with seven hard-working volunteers. We returned to Nine Mile Creek and continued working upstream from East Hollister Road, brushing and removing blockages to flow.

This part of the stream was our focus for the summer because if we could complete this stretch of the stream, it would connect with a long section of stream that we had worked on in the past.

The crew made a gallant effort and a little more than a 100 yards was cleared. A week later, with Chapter President Jon Graverson and Vice President Andy Killoren leading the charge, we returned with a group of nine individuals and really proved our worth.

We were able to complete a section of stream that I had estimated would take another three workdays to complete. This was a huge accomplishment and all involved gave 110 percent and more, but unfortunately we just ran out of "go" with only another 75 feet left to do. Andy and Brian Beirmier returned on a later Saturday and made short work of the remaining section.

Now that section of Nine Mile Creek is flowing freer again, and it showed. This stretch had probably not been free of obstruction for many years. From this site we were able to leapfrog upstream with the help of a private landowner who allowed the chapter access through their property.

From this location we could access the next section that needed our attention. This was a huge help as we had been reaching this area from downstream and it took an hour of hard walking just to reach the work area. While it still took 45 minutes to reach the work area, we were now working closer to the way out rather than always getting further away.

On another workday, in August, we had only four workers, due to restrictions on the private property. A tributary of the Wolf River with a three-acre spring-pond was targeted, and we removed four inactive beaver dams. Tim Waters has a thermistor placed in the stream there, and we're looking forward to seeing the "before and after" temperatures.

We returned to Nine Mile Creek on August 17 to continue the quest. We had five volunteers, including Ed, who came up again from Iowa to help, along with Ernie, Ken, Brian and myself.

We brushed upstream and reached a large beaver dam, where the elevation is very gradual and the water from the dam was backed up more than a mile upstream. This was bad for the stream, bad for the trees and bad for the trout. We uncovered more than 13 dams after the main dam was removed. This spot will need more of our attention next year.

We again returned in late August to the Wolf River and another tributary that was blocked with old inactive beaver dams. Jim, Nate, Doug and I opened up five dams.

In September we helped with the "Wolf Man" triathlon in Langlade, which was very well attended.

There were many other workdays during the year, with most involving just two or three volunteers working during the week, which is great for those who can't make weekend workdays, but still want to be active and involved in our mission.

We are getting results. Reports and photos indicate that the Wolf River is fishing better than it has in decades. Our largest undertaking that I am aware of is the "Old Dam in the Wolf" downstream from Lily. We have been informed that the DNR is planning a collective site visit this fall to evaluate this project. It will be interesting to hear what they find out. Travis Stuck has graciously completed a Wetlands Delineation of the site for the chapter.

We have a fall meeting at 10 a.m. on Saturday, October 19 at Crab n Jack's in White Lake.

If you or your chapter would like to know more or participate in a workday project, you can contact any current board member, Tim Waters at his fly-shop, Wolf River

MASSIVE BEAVER DAM ON NINE MILE CREEK

Wolf River Chapter volunteers uncovered more than 13 dams after removing a main dam. This spot will need more of their attention next year. They returned in late August to another tributary that was blocked with old inactive beaver dams. They opened up five dams.

WOLF RIVER CHAPTER WORK CREWS MADE HUGE PROGRESS THIS YEAR

Help locate eagle nests

Bald Eagle Nest Watch (BENW) is a citizen science program coordinated by the Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance (formerly Madison Audubon) and partner organizations since 2018. We work with hundreds of volunteers and property owners in Wisconsin to monitor bald eagle nests each week during the nesting season, from February through July. The program helps verify whether the adults at each nest successfully raise young, advocates for eagle conservation and works toward a better understanding of eagle populations in Wisconsin.

Volunteers get matched with nests near their home. If you find a nest during your fishing outings, please email BENW Coordinator Brenna Marsicek the location of the nest. GPS coordinates are best. Also, let her know if there is public access to the nest and if you saw eagles in or near the nest or in the area.

This program has already produced some valuable insights into eagle nesting, including eagle responses to disease, lead, disturbance and more. If you see an active eagle nest between January and July, please stay at least 100 yards away.

When you email Brenna the nest location, let her know if you are interested in monitoring the nest. Some nests might have monitors already, but BENW would like to have monitors for all the nests if possible.

You can reach Brenna Marsicek, director of outreach, Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance, at bmarsicek@swibirds.org or 608-255-2473.

Does your fishing car have a TU license plate yet?

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

Your fish guts still wanted

We're sure you've heard the buzz about the overlapping cicada broods that hatched in 15 U.S. states this past summer. Trillions of cicadas emerged with these broods.

Prof. Rich Walker and his team at UNI are working to collect data on these broods in the short window that they were active above ground. This only happens every 221 years and provides a fleeting opportunity to study their effects on recipient ecosystems.

Their goal is to characterize and quantify the consumption of cicadas by fish during this rare event. But they need your help to catch many more fish. If you are interested in contributing data as a citizen scientist, please follow the below guidance.

We need your fish guts

We will accept any fish species from any water body within the range identified on the attached map.

We are looking for fish caught or collected between May and November 2024.

We will accept your whole fish or at a minimum the stomachs from your fish.

We will accept frozen fish or fish preserved in ethanol.

All whole fish from the same location can be placed in labeled Ziplock bags with the below information.

- Date
- Time of day collected
- Waterbody name
- Sample location information (e.g., road crossings, access points, GPS points)
- Cicada presence or absence (visual or auditory)

All fish stomachs should be placed in individually labeled bags.

If you do not have freezer space, please let Dr. Walker know and he will find a sample drop-off or hand-off location.

We really appreciate your help! Feel free to pass this information on to other potentially interested individuals/groups. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Walker at rwalker2442@gmail.com if you have any questions or are ready to hand off your samples.

Letters

I read with interest the article "Reviving Coaster Restoration" in the Summer 2024 issue. I'm very pleased to see that Wisconsin TU is working to revive this issue, and I was thrilled to make a donation.

Coasters were once the crown jewels of Lake Superior tributaries, and they still are in places outside of Wisconsin. They've been gone from Wisconsin for far too long, and the process of bringing them back has been semi-dormant for too long.

The article discussed some substantial gifts made, and some monitoring efforts and research that will begin. All good stuff.

I would like to suggest that there is another step to be taken, one that blurs the line between research and action when it comes to coasters. By that, I mean that one of the studies that should be tried is the enactment of regulations that would allow brook trout to get big enough and abundant enough to go to the lake where they can get really large.

A few years back, a petition for endangered species listing was made for a population of coasters in another state. The petition was denied as no genetic difference between coasters and stream resident brook trout could be shown. Also, studies have shown that salters (migratory brook trout in eastern Canada) tend to leave the stream when their numbers reach the point that crowding occurs.

So, it may be that we already have young coasters, but their populations simply haven't been large enough that they need to move downstream to the next big hole (Lake Superior). Populations might increase to the point that fish would leave for the lake if the regulations didn't allow anglers to keep brook trout when they reach 8-10 inches. I suspect that many anglers probably voluntarily release brook trout. On the other hand, it doesn't take many meat fishermen to decimate a brook trout population.

So, regulations that require catch and release, or perhaps only allow the retention of one brook trout over 20 inches on all Lake Superior tributaries, might serve as a study on whether population increases lead to migration, while at the same time providing the remedy for our lack of returning coasters.

Certainly the minority of anglers who would rather eat 8-inch trout than release 20-inch trout may scream. On the other hand, should they be given the power to veto the comeback of coasters? Can't the meat fisherman look to inland streams to fill their freezers?

To think of it another way, imagine a struggling coastal steelhead stream in the Pacific Northwest. Would anyone advocate for allowing people to take home creels of 8-inch baby steelhead? I doubt it.

Years ago a far-sighted angler and guide championed strict bag and size limits for smallmouth bass on Chequamegon Bay. The result has been a world class fishery. Years later, the same good man pushed for regulations that would help bring back the famously huge northern pike of that bay. That time he was shouted down by the people who wanted to be able to kill and eat small northern pike.

Those two similar situations ended quite differently. How will it end for coasters? Will we see those big brook trout again, or will we yield to the minority of people who can't enjoy fishing unless they take home a creel full of baby trout that haven't had the chance to reach their full potential?

Michigan, Minnesota and Ontario all have more restrictive regulations than Wisconsin. Let's step forward and stop eating the baby fish before they have time to grow into the beautiful coasters that most of us would like to see. Let's advocate for reasonable bag and size limits on all Lake Superior tributaries. Those of us who have been advocating for this for the last three decades or so are getting old. It would be nice to see the coasters return in our lifetimes.

—Tom Wiensch, Rhinelander

Wetland Science Conference in February

The Wisconsin Wetlands Association invites you to participate in the 30th Annual Wetland Science Conference February 25-27, 2025 at the La Crosse Center. Join other scientists and professionals of the wetland and water community of the upper Midwest to:

- Share your wetland research, restoration, management, or outreach program.
- Learn new identification and assessment approaches and techniques.
- Hear about approaches to incorporating wetlands into watershed & community planning.
- Discuss the latest in wetland science, planning, and protection issues.
- Look ahead to the future of wetland science and practices in Wisconsin and the Midwest.

The three-day in-person conference, which regularly draws more than 350 attendees, will include plenary sessions, topical oral sessions, a poster session, workshops, working groups and field trips to area wetlands.

Joint sessions with the Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Symposium will feature trout and wetlands talks.

The conference will also offer many opportunities for networking and student engagement.

The submission deadline for special sessions is Sept. 30, 2024.

A call for presentations and posters will be issued in September and the submission deadline is Nov. 15, 2024.

Student scholarship recipients will receive free registration in exchange for a small amount of volunteering at the conference. The application deadline is Jan. 12, 2025.

There will be a student presentation competition with cash prizes.

Registration will open in December 2024 with a deadline of Jan. 17, 2025.

You or your organization can show support for wetland conservation as a conference sponsor and receive complimentary conference registrations for your staff. Sign up by January 17, 2025, to guarantee your support is recognized on our printed program and signage. Choose from several optional add-ons including a table in the exhibit hall at a special rate for sponsors.

Exhibitors can secure a table in our exhibit hall so you can promote your work to our audience. Exhibit space is limited, so sign up early to reserve your spot. Sign-up deadline is January 17, 2025.

Great Lakes team update

As another successful field season comes to a close, the Great Lakes team reflects on all the work they've accomplished in 2024.

By Danielle Nelson

As we come to the end of another busy field season, I'd like to reflect on all the work we've accomplished this year. We had a slow start to our field season with near-record high spring and early summer water levels on most of our northern Wisconsin streams. It seems like our seasonal technicians and I spent weeks in June visiting sites only to find the water levels were too high to safely do our work. Once dryer weather finally came in July though, it was off to the races with a rush to get all our field work completed in a shorter time frame.

This year we had three seasonal technicians working throughout Wisconsin on our various monitoring efforts. You'll get a chance to hear from them on how their summers went in the next issue of Wisconsin Trout. They pushed through a very wet spring and early summer and got a lot of great work done. Our focus this season was road-stream crossing inventories in the Mecan watershed in central Wisconsin and several watersheds in and around the Bayfield Peninsula in far northern Wisconsin.

Our techs visited more than 300 potential road-stream crossing locations, completing inventories for 223 crossings. These road-stream crossing inventories are an important first step in identifying potential barriers to brook trout movement. Once we identify barriers using road-stream crossing inventories, we can work with partners and funders to plan future aquatic organism passage (AOP) improvement projects. To view the Great Lakes Road Stream Crossing Inventory Database, you can visit this website hosted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources: https://great-lakes-stream-crossing-inventory-michigan.hub.arcgis.com.

Our staff throughout the Great Lakes and here in Wisconsin also continued a large-scale regional monitoring project at road-stream crossing replacement and habitat improvement sites to quantify the impacts that our projects have on fish populations.

This monitoring initiative gives project planners and funders data that shows the impact of these important projects on fish diversity, abundance and size classes. We use electroshocking equipment to survey the fish population near an AOP structure that is going to be replaced and compare that to a nearby control reach in the same stream.

These surveys are repeated for 2-3 years before a project happens and another 2-3 years after a project has been completed. It's a lot of fun to see what lives in our streams and we get a great snapshot of what the fish community looks like at our project sites compared to "natural" populations in undisturbed reaches.

As part of this monitoring, our Wisconsin staff completed electroshocking surveys at eight road-stream crossing replacement sites: Barney Springs (Oconto County), Twentymile Creek (Bayfield County), Whiskey Creek (Bayfield County), Elvoy Creek (Forest County), Unnamed Tributary to Hay Creek (Oconto County), Crossett Creek (Florence County), North Branch Pemebonwon (Florence County), and near a former logging dam on the North Branch Oconto River (Forest County). We also completed electroshocking surveys at a future habitat improvement and fish passage improvement site near a former logging dam on Brule Springs (Forest County).

I also maintained several other ongoing monitoring projects that track brook trout movement and environmental conditions. These projects include Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) antennas that record passing brook trout that we've placed Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags in, in-stream temperature loggers and EnviroDIY units that continuously record temperature, depth and conductivity.

All this data provides us with a better look at how brook trout are using streams, temperature trends in major streams and smaller tributaries and the impacts of temperature and storm events on water quality. I can't wait to spend the off season diving into this data in more depth to find more ways our Wisconsin staff can improve and protect our coldwater resources.

For more information on any of our monitoring efforts in Wisconsin, please contact Danielle Nelson at Danielle.Nelson@tu.org.

Tessa Tormoen

ELECTROFISHING FOR BROOK TROUT POV
Willow Pingel, Northern Wisconsin Project Coordinator Danielle Nelson and Tessa Tormoen look for brook trout in Barney Springs.

GBTU completes trail revamp

The Green Bay Chapter is committed to conserving, protecting, restoring streams and connecting people with our coldwater fisheries and watersheds. GBTU concentrates on physical stream reclamation and restoration projects, public water access and educating others about our area's natural resources.

With that said, our chapter covers Wisconsin's Brown and Door counties. This area does not contain what most trout anglers would define as high-quality trout fishing. Therefore, sometimes we need to be creative in our efforts to spread the Trout Unlimited (TU) message and mission.

Trout Educational Trail (now called the GBTU Trout "Tails" Educational Trail)

We started this project in August 2020 and added the finishing touches in March 2024. The work involved removing old structures and signs first installed by GBTU veterans in the early 1990's and replacing the old signage with newly updated versions. These new signs include an "industry-first" 25-year warranty and are made using an "anti-graffiti laminate," so they should be educating visitors for a long time.

As part of the project, invasive buckthorn was also removed to improve angler access to Haller Creek, which runs along part of the trail.

The educational trail begins at the parking lot across from the N.E.W. Zoo & Adventure Park. According to NEW Zoo Operations Manager Barbara Basten, approximately 200,000 people visit this area annually. While trail visitor data on our Trout Educational Trail, Brown County does collect data on a trail approximately a quarter mile from ours. Numbers show that 11,828 hikers/cross-country skiers used the trail in 2023. According to these numbers the GBTU educational trail is likely enjoyed by thousands of visitors.

GBTU has used the Trout Educational Trail for several habitat improvement projects and chapter picnics. We have helped the DNR stock trout here, providing an urban trout fishery near Green Bay. GBTU has multiple Trout-In-the-Classroom (TIC) programs in area schools. During the past couple years, the DNR has let students release the trout raised in the programs into Haller Creek. Moving forward, the organization would like to continue what it's doing, and perhaps add additional educational opportunities such as youth day camps.

While working on our trail, TU National got word of our efforts and wanted to learn more. Senior Director of Engagement Jeff Yates contacted us directly, saying he would like to use our project as an example for other chapters. He put us in contact with TU National's Online Community Manager, Doug Agee who asked us to share our story on the TU Leaders Forum.

Upon posting our story to this platform on July 27th, Doug commented "Thank you for sharing this and many thanks to the Green Bay Trout Unlimited team for a project well done. I can see every chapter taking this guide and creating their own story."

From here, TU National's Manager of Volunteer Operations, Maggie Heumann, reached out saying "I saw your recent post in the TU forum and checked out your website regarding the GBTU Trout Educational Trail. Great job! It seems as though you all have put together a lot of great resources. Would you be interested in sharing more about the trail on a TU Training webinar?" We are currently in the process of getting slotted in to share our project on a TU National webinar soon.

"We started this project in August 2020 and added the finishing touches in March 2024."

On top of the great news from TU National, we also received a 1500-euro international grant from the Schwabe Group in Germany. Schwabe, the parent company of Nature's Way, gives a handful of annual Corporate Giving Grants to deserving non-profit groups from around the world. It was a very challenging application and interview process that ended in only six organizations receiving an award.

The non-profit groups receiving the grant were from Mexico, Spain, Germany, Italy and Green Bay, Wisconsin.

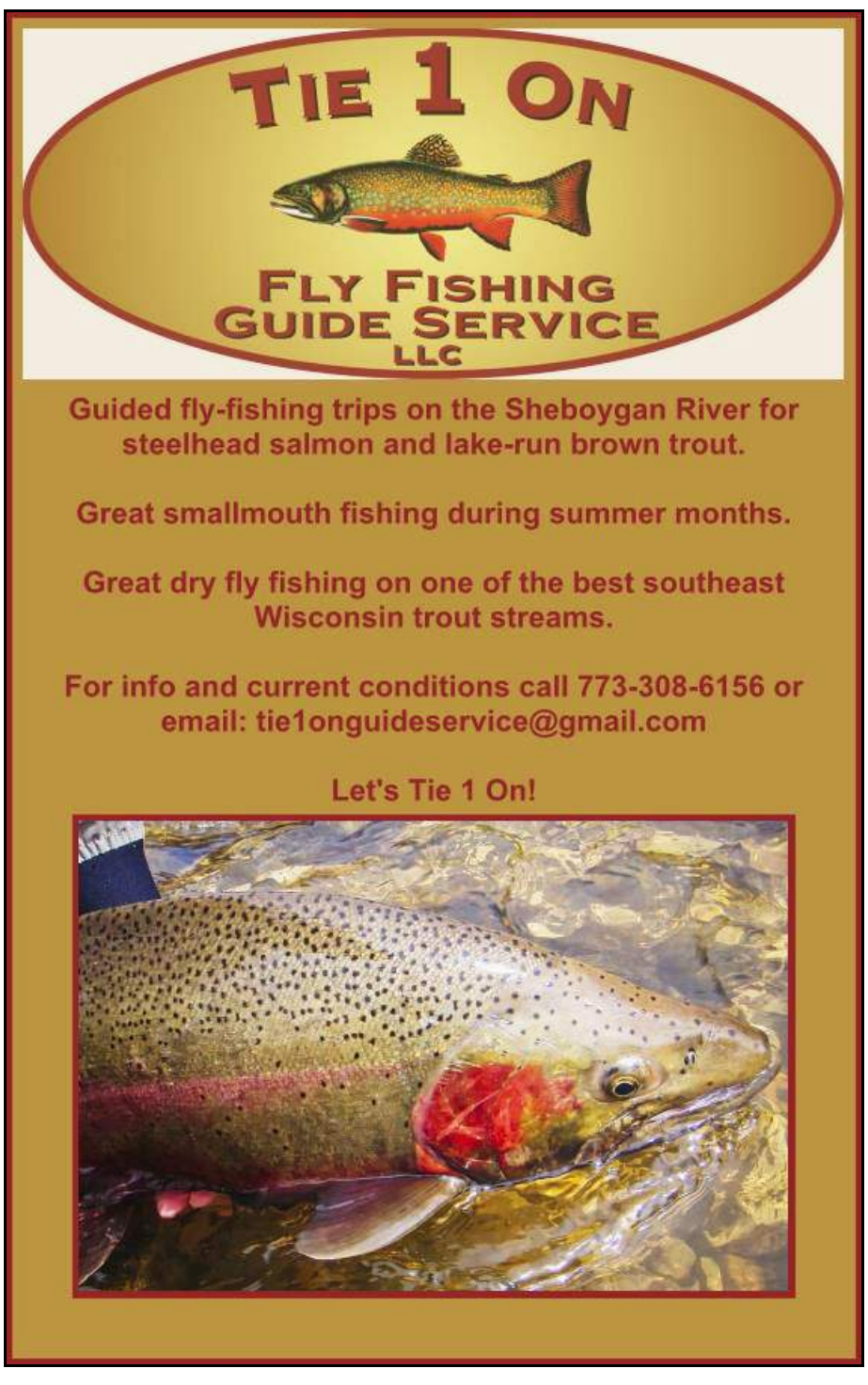
Anyone interested in seeing the GBTU trail project is encouraged to take the short trip just north of Green Bay and check it out. The trail itself is approximately a quarter mile long.

A huge "Thank You" to our donors Schwabe Group and Cellcom, as well as contributions through our annual fundraising banquet.

And a huge thanks to GBTU Trout "Tails" Educational Trail Committee members Dave Ostanek, Randy Rake, John Deuchert, John Tilleman, Jose Diaz, Paul Kruse, Doug Seidl, Kim McCarthy, Adrian Meseberg and the late Gary Stoychoff, as well as Randy Rake (sign designs), Paul Kruse (work day organizer), GBTU members, supporters, partners and everyone who saw the value in the project.

We are truly humbled by all of your support. Thank you.

—Adrian Meseberg



GBTU TROUT TAILS EDUCATION TRAIL WORK CREW

Great Lakes Stream Restoration update

By Chris Collier, Great Lakes Stream Restoration Manager

Our team has had a great summer up north this year, especially once the calendar switched to August and the hordes of mosquitoes finally died back. I typically use this fall article to update on all the work the Great Lakes team has completed over the summer, but the high water and buckets of rain that supported the aforementioned buzzing hoards has led to a mad, end-of-season dash to the September 15 construction deadline for several projects. So instead of a full field season recap, this will be part 1 of 2. Look forward to the winter edition for updates on work in the Oconto, Bois Brule and Central Sands project areas.

We are wrapping up year three of a five-year effort to reconnect and restore habitat in the Border Brule watershed in partnership with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

Kaari Creek, Iron County

I want to start this update off with a project that wasn't on our radar at the start of 2024. Iron County Land Conservation has been leading a multi-year effort to replace nine stream crossings creating barriers to aquatic organism passage and restore more than 800 feet of stream to its historic channel in Kaari Creek. Completing this project package would fully reconnect Kaari Creek to the Montreal River.

During the past few years, eight crossing projects and the stream restoration work were completed. This spring, the County Conservation Office approached TU for help finding the last bit of funding to get the ninth and final crossing project implemented. They needed less than $10,000 and we were able to supply that funding from existing grants we had secured to help local governments implement fish-friendly and flood-resilient infrastructure projects. Even though our TU team played only a small role in this project, I'm incredibly proud to be part of this larger effort because it shows how powerful and impactful the partnerships we form can be. There are many instances where being $10,000 short could end a project, but when you have a strong conservation community with shared goals to improve coldwater systems, it becomes much easier to overcome these hurdles.

Border Brule Watershed

We are wrapping up year three of a five-year effort to reconnect and restore habitat in the Border Brule watershed in partnership with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. You may recall from past Great Lakes updates that this effort will address more than 30 barriers to fish movement created by stream crossings and logging dams. Most of the funding is coming from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act so we're working hard to see that funding benefit Wisconsin communities and coldwater streams.

In 2024, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest and TU implemented four stream crossing replacement projects reconnecting more than nine miles of aquatic habitat in the Border Brule watershed, with much more to come in 2025 and 2026.

Tessa Tormoen

SO BEAUTIFUL IT HARDLY SEEMS REAL
The Great Lakes seasonal team got up close and personal with brook trout during project monitoring this summer.

Knowles Creek, Forest County

The third and final project I want to highlight is a stream-crossing replacement on Knowles Creek in Forest County. This crossing has been on our radar and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest Service radar for a few years.

Our hope was to address it when our Border Brule work wraps up. However, the crossing had ideas of its own. The issues that poor design features that cause crossings to create fish passage barriers also can cause increased flood damage risks which is what happened here. After years of high flows from snow melt and/or spring and summer rains the crossing was showing signs of failure.

Instead of crossing our fingers and hoping it would last a few more years, we were able to find funding to cover construction costs on short notice, work with U.S. Forest Service engineers to create a new crossing design and get the project implemented this summer. The cherry on top of this project was that the DNR reached out this summer asking if there were plans to address this crossing because their surveys showed great potential spawning habitat and coldwater inputs in the upstream reaches. What great timing, and an excellent project for trout climate resiliency.

I want to give a huge shout out to our wonderful seasonal technician crew, Tessa Tormoen, Willow Pingel and Tyler Olson.

They have been hard at work dodging storms and active floods, swimming through mosquitoes, and navigating the northern Wisconsin forest road network. They've completed more than 250 new crossing inventories in the Central Sands and Lake Superior South Shore regions, conducted brook trout monitoring studies at several past and future project sites, and helped TU and our partners with native plantings and habitat improvement projects.

We've still got a few more weeks with the team but I wanted to make sure they received another round of recognition before their time with TU is up. They've been a joy to work with and have set our program up for more success in the coming years.

In closing, it's been another busy summer but that means there's funding, interest and, most importantly, people pushing for this work and getting out to protect and restore Wisconsin's coldwater streams. I'm proud to be a part of our small Great Lakes team and this larger Wisconsin coldwater conservation community. With all this hard work completed, and plans already being made for next year, let's make sure to celebrate the victories from another summer in the field and cherish the memories of days spent on the water.

Feel free to email me at chris.collier@tu.org if you would like to learn more about our projects, and make sure to keep your eyes peeled for part two of our 2024 project roundup in the next *Wisconsin Trout.*

NEW CROSSING BEING INSTALLED ON KAARI CREEK IN IRON COUNTY
This is the final of nine crossing replacements that fully reconnected Kaari Creek to the Montreal River.

KAINE CROSSING COMPLETED
New culvert installed on Kaine Creek in the Border Brule watershed in partnership with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.