



Wisconsin Trout

Fall 2025

State budget fails to advance TU goals

Stewardship reauthorization and trout stamp adjustment don't make the cut, but new proposals for stewardship funding are cause for hope.

By Council Advocacy Chair and Past Council Chair Mike Kuhr

Earlier this summer, under the looming threat of losing out on hundreds of millions of federal dollars for healthcare in Wisconsin, Democratic Governor Tony Evers and the Republican led Legislature hammered out a last-minute compromise on the state's 2025-2027 budget. While it's good to see both parties working together for Wisconsin, from a trout perspective, the budget produced very little change.

We entered the budget cycle with high hopes for a long-overdue \$6 inflation adjustment to the Inland Trout Stamp and a reauthorization of the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program, Wisconsin's iconic public lands initiative. The final budget contained neither of these items.

Trout Stamp

The Governor has included an Inland Trout Stamp inflation adjustment in each of his last two proposed state budgets. Each time, legislative Republicans have not included it in their final budget. Two years ago, there was an issue with what appeared to be a surplus in the Trout Stamp account, which turned out to be Covid related. The surplus has since been spent down.

This time around we got caught up in a legislative audit of the DNR's Fish & Wildlife Account. This account is where all the revenues from hunting and fishing license sales go, including the various stamp accounts. Funds in the Fish & Wildlife Account are used to pay for things like habitat projects and wildlife, fisheries and conservation warden staff. The audit was requested last fall but was not completed and released until recently.

Several key Senate Republicans were not comfortable adjusting any of the hunting and fishing fees until after they saw the audit report. Hence, there will be no Trout Stamp adjustment in this budget. To view the audit findings, search "Wisconsin Legislative Report 25-15."

The audit confirmed the structural deficit in the account of approximately \$15 million per year. Recent budgets have used dollars from the forestry account to plug the gap.

According to the audit, of the \$97 million dollars of Fish & Wildlife Account expenditures, 49.8 percent directly benefitted hunters and anglers. 39.5 percent benefitted hunters, anglers and other users such as hikers, paddlers, bird watchers, etc.

About 10 percent went towards administrative costs, which is well below the maximum of 16 percent set by the legislature. Of all the spending, it was found that just 0.3 percent, or about \$300,000, was spent on work that was found to not benefit hunters and anglers. This was reported primarily as warden time responding to calls about protected species like wolves and bats, ginseng harvest enforcement, and manoomin (wild rice) harvesting.

With the audit clearly showing that expenditures from the DNR's Fish and Wildlife Account are being spent responsibly and benefiting hunters and anglers, it's time to talk about conservation funding going forward. In that regard, an adjustment to the Inland Trout Stamp needs to be a priority.

Stewardship funding

For the first time since its inception in 1989, the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program will not be re-



BUSTING CLAYS AND SUPPORTING THE K-N STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

A number of conservation organizations including the Wisconsin Council of TU, sponsored a sporting clays shoot and invited state legislators. Held at the Waunakee Gun Club, the day included a hearty lunch, some challenging shooting and a chance to chat about issues that matter to everyone. Without fail, every group asked the attending legislators and staffers to do whatever it takes to fund the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. Other sponsoring organizations included Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, Safari Club International, Wisconsin Trappers Association, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, Pheasants Forever and others. Council Advocacy Chair Mike Kuhr and Wisconsin Trout Editor Todd Franklin participated in the event.

authorized as part of the budget process. Current funding for the program runs through 2026. Republicans introduced a re-authorization bill earlier in the spring. The bill would extend the program for four years at \$28.25 million annually, require the DNR to prioritize property management over land acquisition, and require projects or grants of more than \$1 million to run through the legislative process as a separate bill.

At the end of August, Sen. Jodi Habush Sinykin (D-Whitefish Bay) and Rep. Vincent Miresse (D-Stevens Point) introduced a new proposal to reauthorize Knowles-Nelson for six years, funded at \$72 million annually. This proposed legislation is co-sponsored by all 60 Democratic lawmakers.

The Democratic proposal would separate funding for property management work and land acquisition projects. It would also create a 17-member Stewardship Board that would advise the DNR on all Stewardship projects and have Approval Authority for Stewardship grants of more than \$2.5 million.

With proposals from both sides now on the table, we believe the time is right for a compromise to save stewardship funding. We will continue to work with our conservation partners to advocate for a strong re-authorization of the K-N Stewardship Program. Watch for Action Alerts this fall for opportunities to weigh in on this important issue.



FRIENDS-SUPPORTED PROJECT

A Friends grant supported this Wisconsin River Valley Chapter project on Spring Creek.

Support habitat work through our Friends of Wisconsin TU grant program

The 2025 habitat work season is wrapping up and the planning is underway for 2026. Chapter leaders should be thinking about future habitat projects and potential grant requests from the Friends of Wisconsin TU program in 2026. The maximum grant size is \$2,500.

Chapter leaders should be aware of these important dates:

- In late October, chapters that received Friends grants in 2025 will receive the annual Year End Reporting Form, on which chapters report to the State Council about whether or not they successfully completed the funded project. Completion of the form is required before chapters can apply for additional grants.
- In early December of 2025, we'll send to chapters the 2026 Friends of Wisconsin TU grant application form. Chapters can submit the application online, with a deadline of January 15, 2026.

We are always working to increase the funds in our two grant programs so they can provide more grants to chapters. Remember that required minimum distributions from IRA accounts can include donations to qualified charities such as these.

The Council wishes to thank all of our loyal donors who make these programs possible. Besides having their names listed for a year in Wisconsin Trout, donors can feel good about all of the habitat work accomplished by Friends of Wisconsin TU grants and the places that now have public access thanks to our Watershed Access Fund.

You probably saw the envelope that we inserted into this edition of Wisconsin Trout, making it easy for you to donate to the Friends of Wisconsin TU and Watershed Access Fund programs.

Please understand that this envelope is not intended to be used for membership matters. Please contact TU at 1-800-834-2419 for those questions.

In remembrance of Carol Murphy

As most of you reading this experienced when hearing the news of Carol's death, I rubbed my forehead, shook my head, wrung my hands, and thought, "this must be a mistake, what the..." Tears have been shed and her wake attended, along with a crowd of people winding around the funeral home for hours on August 20. Her complete obituary is available at gorgenfh.com.

Carol first interacted with me at the annual banquet about 10 years ago, asking "What can I do to help?" She was friendly, eager to help and a joyful person to be with. She started coming to all our meetings and developed a connection with Chapter President Tim Fraley. He definitely saw her potential in helping our chapter go in new directions.

Tim was aware of the TU's objective to get more women involved, and Carol was a Godsend in this regard. Soon, she oversaw our Diversity Initiative and began helping with the Women's Fishing Clinics. She helped women who never dreamed of fishing with anyone other than their spouses out on the stream. She enjoyed sharing her knowledge about cold water, trout, fishing and flyfishing, and the insects that fish feed on. She enjoyed many outings at the West Fork Sports Club and although she would happily camp, she preferred outings with cabins.

She obtained rods and reels, flies, instructors, fly boxes for souvenir gifts for attendees of the outings, and shared her knowledge of the sport with anyone who would listen. She became the local liaison for the Water Action Volunteers. She got to fish in Montana and Yellowstone with guides doing research for TU and shared all of that with her Women's Clinic attendees.

All the while, she worked full time and mothered her family, and her Nohr Chapter members. She always made the best brownies ever for our workdays and picnic gatherings, she always smiled and she never complained



SMALL IN STATURE BUT HUGE IN HEART AND PASSION

about all the tasks she did for the chapter.

When Tim Fraley died while serving as our chapter president in October 2021, Carol stepped up and served in that role until the time of her passing. Carol brought ZOOM attendance to our monthly meetings so folks could listen and contribute without the long drive home afterwards. How do we replace someone like Carol? It will likely take several chapter members to fill her shoes, and they will find inspiration from Carol, who always asked "How can I help?"

Carol was the ultimate TU member. She always did what she promised, never made excuses or whined about how much she had to get done, and relished the opportunity to make the streams better than she found them. Carol showed those around her how to be happy to be helping, shared the joys of accomplishment and coming up with new ways to make our organization more successful, and, by her mentoring, showed us how to cooperate with various neighboring chapters to work together and not be competitive or possessive of area streams.

Teamwork and joy were her trademarks. Honor her legacy by adopting them as your own.

Thank you, Carol, for all you taught us by your example.
May God Bless You.
Gordon Grieshaber, Secretary, Harry & Laura Nohr Chapter of TU



WE ALL LOVED CAROL'S LICENSE PLATES

2026 Wisconsin TU State Council Banquet

Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026

Oshkosh Marriott Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center
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Dinner, Awards Program, & Raffles!

For more info or to purchase tickets visit:
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Be an "Early Bird" - Purchase tickets (\$50 each) on or before Dec. 31 to receive complimentary bucket raffle tickets!
To purchase by mail: send payment (payable to "Wisconsin TU") and names of attendees to
Jen Kuhr 6103 Queens Way Monona, WI 53716

Update on mining issues

By Johnson Bridgwater, River Alliance of Wisconsin

It was a busy summer in northern Wisconsin regarding mining issues, but as we head into fall, things have quieted down significantly. However, regionally and federally, things may start heating up.

Updates on Canadian company GreenLight Metals (GLM) in Wisconsin

A significant “accident” occurred at the GLM Bend exploration site in Taylor County— this was a mechanical failure, and fortunately no personnel were injured. However, roughly 1,000 feet of one of the completed bore holes was not filled, and a piece of casing is now lodged in the hole, preventing proper closure.

We are still waiting on details regarding any possible “fix” to correct this problem. Taylor County has an extremely shallow depth-to-ground water in general, so we are following this situation closely.

Despite this drilling failure, and despite GLM not having a solution for the failure, GLM is pressing ahead on a second permit for more exploration drilling in the same vicinity.

This second permit will be overseen by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), although the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is conducting a formal review, as well, to which several Wisconsin organizations and Tribes including River Alliance submitted extensive formal comments.

BLM will utilize USFS’s final report for their own findings process.

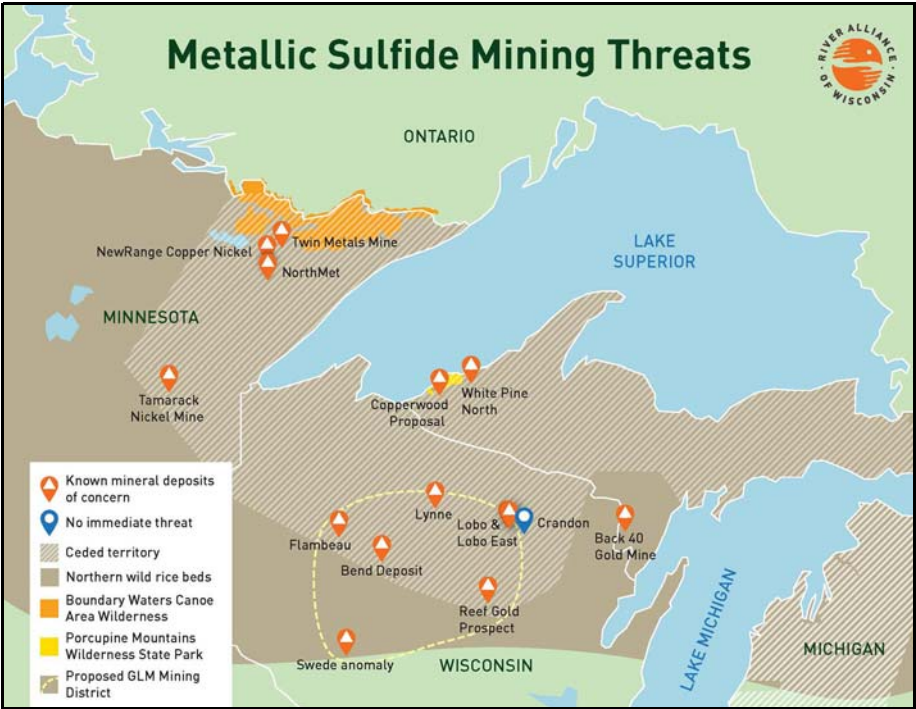
It should be noted that due to federal NEPA changes made at the request of the president, it is quite likely that BLM will simply request a CE (Categorical Exclusion) rather than a more rigorous EA (Environmental Assessment) for the second prospecting (exploration) permit.

GLM has been telling potential investors they will be conducting exploration drilling in Oneida County and Marathon County this winter, and River Alliance is closely following. As of early September, the DNR reports no new filings from GLM in either county.

Federal news

So far, Wisconsin has eluded any direct mining-related impacts as a result of executive orders issued by the Trump Administration designed to “speed up” exploitation of oil, gas and mined natural resources. However, the Trump Administration has now successfully had copper added to the proposed 2026 Critical Minerals list. Inclusion on the list makes a mineral eligible for benefits like accelerated permitting and investment incentives.

This action, if finalized, may lead to potential federal funding being sought for mining in our state, even though known Wisconsin copper deposits are very small. However, Minnesota and the U.P. of Michigan will likely see increased metallic sulfide mining activity as a result of this likely change to the U.S. critical minerals list.



Regional news

The Department of Defense is backing nickel exploration in Minnesota’s Aitken County and Michigan upper peninsula, and they recently increased funding for this purpose. These are potentially large-scale underground metallic sulfide mines that would disrupt one of our region’s most important, and sensitive, ecosystems: Manoomin, or “wild rice.” The issue relates to the release of sulfides/ sulfate into surrounding water bodies. Studies have proven wild rice is detrimentally impacted by iron mining and hard rock mining. So as the federal government pushes for more domestic

mining in this region, River Alliance and many others are readying themselves for a wave of new mining in the second half of this decade. Stay tuned.

Feel free to contact me about all things mining or visit River Alliance of Wisconsin’s Mining Page.

To sign up for our “Mining Updates” emails, visit wisconsinrivers.org/mining/

Johnson Bridgwater is water advocates organizer for the River Alliance of Wisconsin. You can reach him at jbridgwater@wisconsinrivers.org.

Wisconsin TU needs your support

We're seeking individuals, organizations, and businesses to Sponsor our 2026 State Council Banquet to be held on Sat. Feb. 7 in Oshkosh

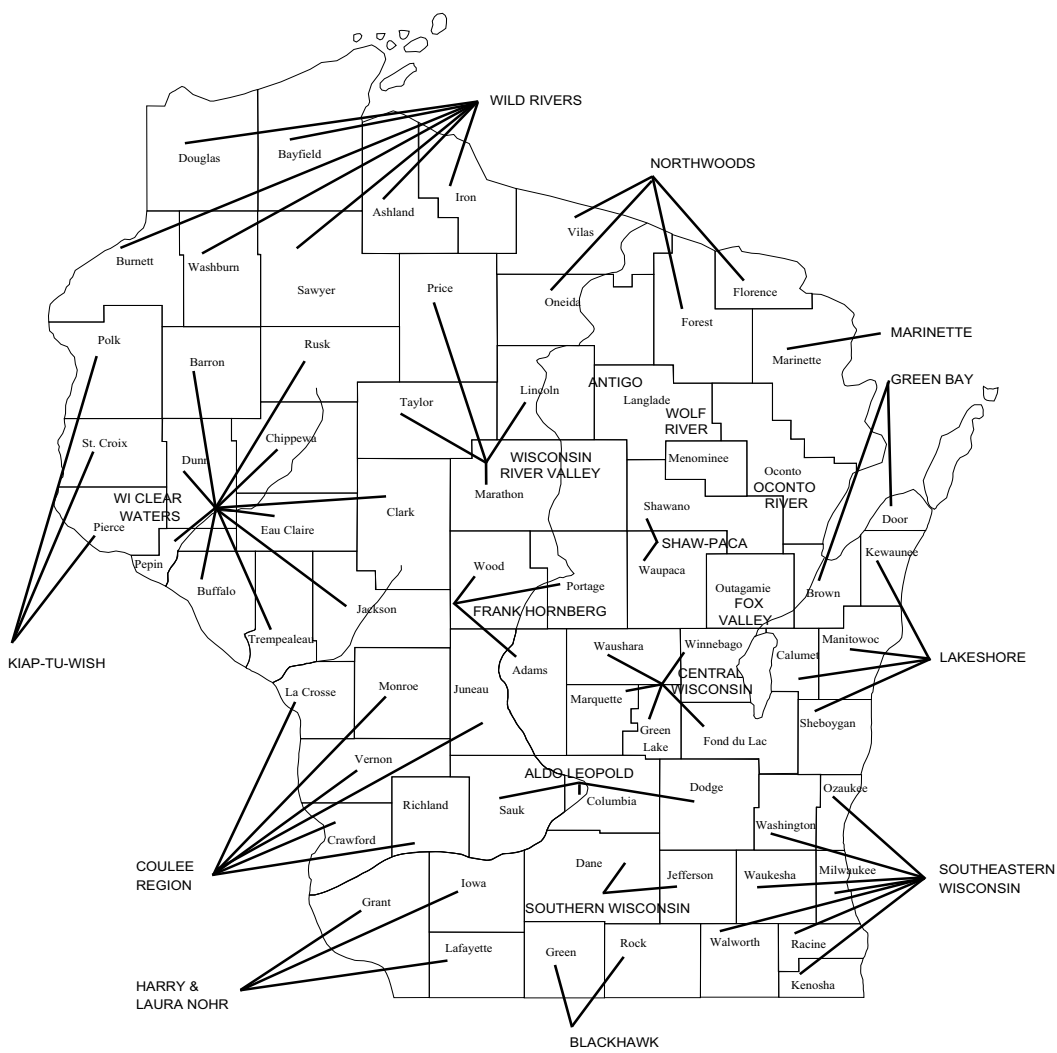
Levels of Sponsorship:
Headwaters = \$125
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Watershed = \$1,000
all levels include tickets to the event!

For more info visit:
<http://wicouncil.tu.org>
or contact Jen Kuhr at jkuhr101@gmail.com

2026 WITU Banquet Sat. Feb. 7, 2026



Chapters of the Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited



Aldo Leopold (#375): Dan Endres: 608-963-1374; dtendres9@gmail.com; aldoleopold.tu.org
Antigo (#313): Scott Henricks: 715-623-3867; henricks51@yahoo.com
Blackhawk (#390): Dave Brethauer: 608-897-4166; dave.brethauer@gmail.com; www.BlackhawkTU.org
Central Wisconsin (#117): Laura Tucker; lbtucker1953@gmail.com; centralwisconsintu.org
Coulee Region (#278): Jason Freund; jasonfreund4@gmail.com; CouleeRegionTU.org
Fox Valley (#193): Doug Nelson; dpebnelson@hotmail.comwww.foxvalleytu.org
Frank Hornberg (#624): Doug Erdmann: 715-712-3134; derdmann55@solarus.net; www.Face-book.com/HornbergTU
Green Bay (#083): Adrian Meseberg; 920-562-6129; christinaandadrian@hotmail.com; greenbaytu.org
Harry & Laura Nohr (#257): nohrtu.com
Kiap-TU-Wish (#168): Suzanne Constantini; 651-491-5651; smecon26@gmail.com; kiaptuwish.org
Lakeshore (#423): Al Wortz: alwortz@gmail.com; www.WisconsinTU.org/Lakeshore
Marinette (#422): Dale Lange: 715-582-1135; dhlange@centurytel.net, marinettecounty.tu.org
Oconto River (#385): Dean Simon; 920-750-4963; tw9ff@yahoo.com.hh; ocontorivertu.com
Shaw-Paca (#381): Kyle Kossel; 920-379-5741; kylekossel@yahoo.com; shawpaca.tu.org
Southeastern Wisconsin (#078): Rick Larkin; ricklarkin76@gmail.com; sewtu.tu.org; www.face-book.com/southeastwisconsintroutunlimited; SoutheasternWITU on Instagram
Southern Wisconsin (#061): Steve Musser: www.swtu.org
Wild Rivers (#415): John Simonson: 920-212-0185; john@wiflyfisher.com; WRTU.org
Wisconsin Clear Waters (#255): Bill Heth; wlcaddis@gmail.com; wcwtu.org
Wisconsin River Valley (#395): Eric Pease; wrvtu.org
Wolf River (#050): Jon Graverson; 920-284-4309; wolfrivertroutunlimited@outlook.com
WolfriverTU.org

Visit the Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited at **wicouncil.tu.org** or find us on Facebook.

State Council Leaders

Chair: Myk Hranicka, 920-627-5779; jdrflooring@gmail.com;

Interim Vice Chair: Scott Allen; 608-495-9385; jscottallen12@gmail.com

Secretary: Boyd Roessler, boydroessler@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer: Scott Wagner; john.scott.wagner@outlook.com; 715-781-6874

Vice Chair, Central Region: Linn Beck; 920-216-7408; chlbeck@att.net

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

Vice Chair, Southern Region: Jim Wierzba; 414-688-3606; hoke4me@aol.com

Vice Chair, Western Region: Gary Horvath; 715-425-8489; garyjhorvath42@comcast.net

Advocacy Coordinator: Mike Kuhr; mikek.trout@yahoo.com

Education Coordinator: Bob Haase; 920-922-8003; oldimagemaker@gmail.com

Friends of WITU and Watershed Access Fund Grant Coordinator: Kim McCarthy; 920-639-3697; kjmccarthy75@gmail.com.

Membership: Chair Paul Kruse; 920-639-2361; kruser500@gmail.com

National Leadership Council Representative: Scott Allen; 608-495-9385; jscottallen12@gmail.com

Trout In the Classroom Coord.: Greg Olson; driftless23@gmail.com

TUCARES: Linn Beck; 920-216-7408; chlbeck@att.net

Veterans Services Partnership Coordinator: Mike Johnson; 262-327-0849; Mike@thosejohnsons.com

Webmaster:

Diversity Initiative: Heidi Oberstadt; 715-573-5104; heidi.oberstadt@gmail.com

Legal Counsel: Open
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Are you getting emails from TU?

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

WISCONSIN TROUT

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

Todd Franklin, Editor
1423 Storytown Road
Oregon, WI 53575
(608) 516-3647
toddfranklinwistruout@gmail.com

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| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
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WITU Youth Camp a standard of success

As usual, this year's camp provided a great experience for everyone involved.

The 2025 youth camp was a huge success across the board. I know I say it every year, but this year's class was probably the best group of campers we have had. Campers were engaged during all the programs and as the weekend went on you could see the development in their progress as they applied everything that was presented to them.

A big part of their development this year was due to a couple of important factors. One was the staffing of our adult mentors. We had a luxury this year as we ended up with 24 adult mentors in camp. The important thing about this is that when we had some of our mentors that do presentations, we had their campers covered with experienced mentors, so the youth didn't miss a beat. The second thing that had to do with the success was the enthusiasm our mentors had. I

think not being short-handed allowed all the mentors to be able to focus on the task at hand, so they had as much fun as the campers did.

With plenty of adult mentors, junior mentors could focus on their intended roles of making the campers feel comfortable in the camp environment. With the campers feeling good about their home away from home for the weekend, they seemed to adjust better.

I asked the campers to reach out and thank their sponsoring chapters for providing the opportunity to attend the camp. We ask that chapters follow up with their campers and invited them to get involved with your chapter.

I can't thank everyone enough for their efforts this year. I would like to thank our chapters for filling the camp, as without their support there wouldn't be a camp. Thank you to the adult mentors, including six new mentors, who gave up their weekend to spend it with us. Our junior

mentors also deserve a big hand for helping to keep everything running smoothly.

A big thank you to the camp committee members for getting everything ready for this year's camp. It isn't an easy task, but you all did a wonderful job.

If you are interested in getting youth involved in TU, please consider joining us on the committee. We meet once a month via Zoom starting in February. This is one of the most important things that the State Council does to get young people involved with our chapters. You can reach me at chlbeck@att.net or 920-216-7408.

Next year's camp is scheduled for August 13-16 at the Pine Lake Bible Camp.

Thank you all again for your efforts to make the 2025 Wisconsin Trout Unlimited Youth camp a phenomenal success.

—Linn Beck

DNR Fisheries research update

An update on two ongoing research studies and two new ones.



KICK SAMPLE COLLECTION OF MACROINVERTEBRATES

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

The trout-beaver study is officially ending as a field project. My field crew and I have been making final visits this past summer to many of our 22 study streams on which beaver have been allowed to build dams. We will continue monitoring at least three of these streams for long-term effects of either continued presence of beaver and beaver dams or recovery of stream habitat and trout populations following the reinstatement of beaver control. This work will take place as part of an ongoing temporal trends monitoring study.

Although fieldwork for the trout-beaver study is ending, data analyses and writing will continue. Study results will be shared with decision makers and stakeholders as the DNR's 2015 Beaver Management Plan is reviewed and updated in the coming months.

Elk Creek status

One stream on which we are resuming beaver control and monitoring recovery is Elk Creek in Richland and Vernon counties. In the last issue of Wisconsin Trout, I wrote about the trout population decline and habitat degradation issues attributable to the proliferation of beaver on Elk Creek since 2017. Funding provided by the Wisconsin Council is being used to remove beaver and dams throughout Elk Creek beginning this September. This will restore free-flowing conditions to allow unimpeded access to trout moving up Elk Creek to spawn

this autumn.

The temporal trends monitoring study, as its name implies, addresses the importance of long-term data for understanding how environmental conditions change in streams and how such changes affect trout populations.

This study originally focused on Driftless Area trout streams but had been expanded to include some trout streams in other parts of the state. Fieldwork involves sampling trout and continuously monitoring water temperature and water level. Trout in some streams are also tagged once or twice a year to estimate survival and track their movement.

Data collected for the temporal trends monitoring study has been contributory to many additional studies including gill lice dynamics in brook trout populations, evaluation of bony structures for estimating fish age, effects of population density on trout growth and beaver dam effects on trout populations.

New studies under way

Two new studies began this year on two emerging issues: neonicotinoid pesticides and upcoming changes to trout stocking in Class II streams.

Neonicotinoids or neonics are a class of insecticides widely used across Wisconsin to protect crops such as corn and soy from pests. Neonics are water soluble and environmentally persistent. In streams, they are selectively toxic to macroinvertebrates or aquatic insects, which trout depend on for food. Much remains unknown about neonic exposure levels in Wisconsin and their

direct effects on aquatic insect assemblages and indirect effects on trout in streams.

This study will quantify levels in streams of three neonicotinoids commonly used in Wisconsin agriculture: clothianidin, imidacloprid, and thiamethoxam. The focus will be on trout streams in agricultural watersheds in the Driftless Area. Some streams in non-agricultural watersheds in other parts of the state will also be included for comparison.

While this study will provide much-needed baseline data on neonic exposure in trout streams, it will also address an emerging angler satisfaction issue for anglers who fly fish streams based on hatches of mayflies and other aquatic insects.

Mayflies appear to be particularly sensitive to neonics, and concerns have been raised about changes in the occurrence of mayfly hatches.

Stream macroinvertebrate data collected in this study will help show the degree to which important Driftless Area trout streams may or may not be impaired and what implications there may be for fly fishers.

We started collecting samples for the neonic study this past spring. Stream macroinvertebrate samples were collected at 25 sites on 22 streams in April. We collected surface water samples from 30 streams in June, with eight of those streams resampled in July. We also sampled 14 new streams in July. The neonic levels observed in the 44 streams we sampled in 2025 will help focus our sampling efforts in 2026.

RESTORING AND PROTECTING STREAMS, WORKING WITH KIDS, WORKING WITH VETERANS, ADVOCATING FOR CLEAN WATER

That's what we do, and your purchase of a Wisconsin TU license plate supports our efforts. Go to www.dot.state.wi.us/drivers/vehicles/personal/special/trout.htm



Council to discuss public access issues at February meeting in Oshkosh

By TUDARE Project Manager Sara Strassman & Advocacy Chair/Past Council Chair Mike Kuhr

The Driftless Area represents a program within a program at Trout Unlimited, as our Driftless Area Program houses the Driftless Area Restoration Effort Fish Habitat Partnership.

The Driftless Area has long been a priority landscape for Trout Unlimited, having a long history of support for protection and restoration from individuals, chapters, council and national representatives. Almost 20 years ago, TU's Driftless Area Restoration Effort (DARE or TUDARE) was formed, officially recognized as a Fish Habitat Partnership in 2007.

As we look back at the decades of conservation in the Driftless Area, it is important to recognize that these programs span a timeframe of organization maturation for Trout Unlimited. The organization grew from a small headquarters staff with regional efforts focused on Home Rivers to a large professional staff primarily based in the field.

Twenty years ago, some TU regions and programs were only beginning to organize and plan conservation in key watersheds. Meanwhile, DARE was accepted as a National Fish Habitat Partnership and was provided funding through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to support fish habitat projects on the ground, something that had not existed previously.

The NFHP partnership is bigger than Trout Unlimited and we have the privilege to help deliver part of a national, strategic action plan that implements fish habitat and educates about the importance of aquatic conservation. To garner one of five National Fish Habitat Partnerships in the first years of that program is a testament to the work of the grassroots, council and national partners who collaborated for conservation on the ground in the Driftless Area.

Visionary conservationists

The long arc of restoration within the Driftless Area is obviously much larger than Trout Unlimited and we owe a debt to the early conservationists of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission and the Soil Conservation Service, predecessors of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, respectively, who witnessed and studied early land and natural resource management failures and prescribed solutions to rectify wasteful use of the resource.

In a politically prescient reflection on the restoration at Coon Creek and the forbearance of the SCS to avoid harming streams for private landowner benefit, Aldo Leopold wrote "To those who know the speech of hills and rivers, straightening a stream is like shipping vagrants—a very successful method of passing trouble from one place to the next. It solves nothing in the collective sense."

The painstaking efforts of soil conservationists, fisheries managers, ecologists and foresters in the early Driftless Area restoration ventures were the underpinning of the fish recovery that we are building upon today. We stand upon the shoulders

of those early giants.

Trout Unlimited, in our efforts in the Driftless Area, has built upon the early work of grassroots volunteers who built features and carried out locally-led projects. Locally-led projects on easements reinforce the relationships between landowners and anglers. They infuse energy into chapters and they represent the passion of TU to local communities.

TUDARE efforts

The Driftless Area Restoration Effort has worked to meet the scale of the restoration challenge across multiple states and hundreds of spring creeks. The work of the national staff of Trout Unlimited is to facilitate the ambitious, landscape-scale restoration initiative in the Driftless Area by securing and managing millions of dollars in federal funding, leading the Driftless Area National Fish Habitat Partnership, and coordinating across states.

To achieve results on a watershed scale, we need as many landowners as possible to participate in restoration. Demonstrating successful, high-quality projects stimulates further engagement and motivates action among landowners. There will be opportunities for access that develop through the relationships and collaborative approach that is used, and fisheries that improve as a result of restoration actions throughout the watersheds.

From a TU chapter perspective, having the ability to partner with neighboring chapters at a regional level or with national TU staff on initiatives like DARE are invaluable. Wisconsin has long led the way when it comes to the "One TU" model of conservation. Chapters in northeast Wisconsin have been joining forces for decades to improve trout waters in the area. That same grassroots need for collaboration brought chapters together across four states to form the DARE program in the Driftless Area. We're seeing a similar upwelling of collaboration forming in the Central Sands region.

Council policies

As we nurture and expand these regional relationships, it's important for grassroots chapter leaders to be mindful of local donors and public access. Years ago, chapter leaders came together through the State Council and created a policy that says state and local funds raised and spent on local chapter projects should only occur on publicly accessible lands, unless permission is specifically granted to the chapter by the Council to do otherwise.

Policies like this protect against chapters pouring thousands of dollars into projects only to see "no trespassing" signs go upon completion. The Council's Friends of Wisconsin TU grant program is administered with the same regard for public access. Grants through the program are only available to chapter projects that have public access in place.

Wisconsin is home to more than 13,000 miles of classified trout water, and many flow through lands held in private ownership. Conservation of trout water on these lands requires a more nuanced approach. As we expand our scope of habitat restoration beyond the stream channel, we start to recognize the impor-

tance of things like adjacent wetlands, groundwater recharge, and land use in the riparian corridor. Taking a watershed view allows us to see that achieving the best results for the trout in the stream requires a broad base of support from partners at a local and regional level. Private landowners & contractors, government agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, along with grassroots TU volunteers and regional TU staff, all play a vital role in caring for our coldwater resources.

Regional TU staff and government agencies often have access to conservation programs specifically designed to assist private landowners. When a conservation project occurs on both publicly accessible and privately held lands, special attention must be given during the planning and implementation stages.

Fancy Creek project

The Fancy Creek project that was highlighted in the July 2025 issue of Wisconsin Trout is one such case where conservation work is occurring on both privately held lands and adjoining lands with a public fishing easement in place. DARE staff approached the Council early in the planning stage and it was mutually determined that locally raised chapter and Council funds would not be put towards this project.

However, the restoration on Fancy Creek is an outstanding example of a high-caliber project that brings substantial uplift in fish habitat and ecosystem resilience through our NRCS RCPP program. The project implements hydrologic and geomorphic restoration components and large-scale wetland restoration on a scale that is not easily conducted without professional engineers, biologists, geomorphologists and contractors.

It is critical that this type of restoration be a part of the portfolio of TU if we hope to achieve durable trout stream restoration in the Driftless Area as a whole. In a landscape that is significantly impacted by floodplain aggradation, straightening and historic and modern agricultural practices, we must increasingly utilize hammers that can ring the bell in a resounding way. We must scale our restoration to the scope of the stressors we aim to address.

Measures to meet objectives

To continue to collaborate from the grassroots level through the national level, there must be intentional efforts on both sides. Below are measures being followed by Trout Unlimited and the Driftless Area Restoration Effort to meet the objectives and intent of national and state conservation policies:

- TUDARE does not proactively request chapter and council contributions toward projects when the landowner does not have public access. We respect the wishes of the council and chapters to restrict their funds to sites with public access.
- Project contributions that are received from chapters and councils are held in segregated accounts for those projects.

- Program contributions are not restricted. These funds typically cover travel expenses, printing, licenses, registrations and similar costs that fall outside allowable grant costs. They are too valuable and scarce to be used toward project costs.
- TU does not withhold technical assistance from landowners who request site visits and technical advice. Landowners may choose to participate in RCPP and USFWS funding programs and pay their portion of the required cost share or seek those funds from non-chapter and council sources.
- TU does ask all landowners we meet with to consider providing access for angling.
- TU has secured \$4.4 million from the Natural Resources Conservation Service through its Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This is a federal program through which funding flows to agricultural landowners to install restoration practices. TU includes priority points in the ranking awarded to projects with perpetual easements. Projects that rank highly without easement points may also proceed in some circumstances, as high ranking signifies projects with significant habitat proposed, perennial riparian buffer and sited on a priority water (Brook Trout Reserve or classed coldwater)
- Similarly, the DARE Fish Habitat Partnership, with roughly \$250,000 per year, includes priority points for projects that improve recreational fishing. The DARE FHP may also support non-construction projects that further the goals of the Partnership such as assessment, research and reports.

Overall, the philosophy in place at DARE is to meet landowners where they are, to earn trust through mutual respect and to address resource impairments that suppress trout populations and coldwater ecosystem integrity. The path to conservation in a private-land-dominated landscape is to be inclusive and work with landowners in a voluntary fashion. Access or none, all of our work depends on landowners taking voluntary actions.

The Trout Unlimited national DARE program staff want to continue to work collaboratively with the Council and chapters. There will continue to be easement projects on which we can collaborate. We will continue to encourage landowners to provide easements, including prioritizing those projects in our funding pools. There will also continue to be restoration, reconnection and protection work on streams without easements—that work will benefit anglers, too.

Scott's
ROD SHOP

Scott W. Grady
Rodmaker

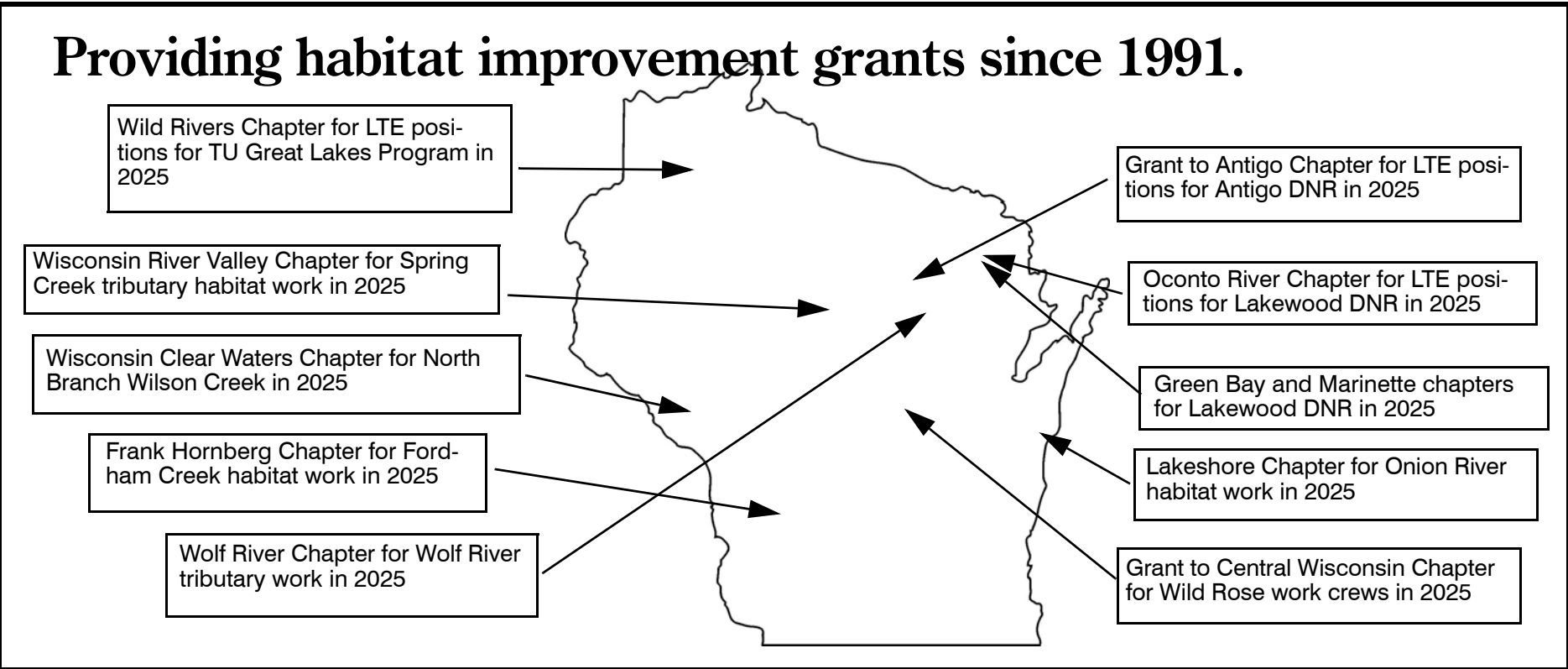
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Please support Friends of Wis. TU in 2026

The Council’s Friends of Wisconsin TU habitat grant program awarded 12 grants totaling \$30,000 for the 2025 work season. These grants supported habitat work and projects throughout the state. The map below shows exactly where and how those grants were used to improve trout habitat in 2025. Help us support even more projects in 2026.



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CALL FOR STATE COUNCIL AWARD NOMINATIONS

Know anyone deserving of an award?

State Council award nominations are due November 15.
Help us recognize those who deserve it most.

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, 2025. Please contact Todd if you have any questions. His email address is toddfranklinwis-trout@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

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.

Show us your Wisconsin TU license plates!

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



Watershed Access Fund:
Obtaining public access

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 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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Karst Tour educates about history of landscape



VALLEY WAS NEARLY 100 FEET DEEPER BEFORE SETTLEMENT

Eric Carson of the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey was the featured speaker at recent Karst Geology Tour. Here, Carson is seen at the Hogback State Natural Area explaining that the floor of the Kickapoo River Valley near Steuben was once 97 feet deeper than it is today.

By Gillian Pomplun

Crawford Stewardship Project's (CSP) annual Karst Tour drew a crowd of about 50 to the Gays Mills Community Commerce Center recently. The event featured a talk by Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey's Eric Carson, and a visit to the Hogback Prairie State Natural Area near Steuben.

Carson is a quaternary geologist, and his primary research converges on the processes and sedimentary archives of streams near former glacial margins.

His interests range from millennial-scale variations in streamflow and flooding due to changes in past climates to historic records of landscape change and sediment mobility related to human-driven changes in vegetation cover and land use. Within this framework, the Driftless Area of southwestern Wisconsin is a prime example of this geomorphic setting, and a major geographic focus for his research.

CSP's new executive director, Amy Fenn, introduced Carson to the crowd by. Fenn discussed CSP's updated mission of "uniting neighbors in care of human and natural communities."

"What we really liked about this was the uniting neighbors," Fenn explained. "I think our work's always been about human and natural communities, but we're really excited about bringing in a new emphasis in bringing people together, especially in these divided political times, and our local landscape is something that we all care deeply about and have shared values about, and I think it's really great to emphasize that."

Focus on geologic mapping

Carson kicked off his presentation with a picture of the mountains in West Virginia near where he grew up, saying the Kickapoo River Valley reminds him of his home.

"Today, I'll be talking about the geology and geologic research that I do along the Kickapoo River, and more broadly across the Driftless Area," Carson said. "I do this from the framework of producing geologic maps, maps of the surficial sediment of the earth here in the Driftless."

Carson said he was hired by the Geological Survey specifically because of his background with rivers and glaciers, and that his focus is on geologic mapping.

Carson said that updated geologic maps have been completed and

published for La Crosse and Monroe counties, and updated maps for Grant, Iowa, Lafayette, Crawford, Vernon and Richland counties are currently undergoing a peer review. Maps for Trempealeau and Jackson counties are nearing completion, and in the future, if funding is received, maps for the rest of the Driftless Area in Pierce, Pepin, Buffalo, Rock, Walworth and Green counties will be developed.

"When we do our geologic mapping on a county-by-county scale, we do it at a scale of 1:100,000. So everything is shrunk down to 100,000 times as small as it normally is," Carson explained. "Historically, we did that because it made for a nice-sized sort of poster. These days, we don't do printing anymore due to budget cuts, but we still do the work at that scale because it's good for understanding the geology and understanding geologic processes and geologic history."

Carson was very proud of a recently completed surficial geological map of Wisconsin, funded by the U.S. Geological Survey. Seven professionals who had spent their entire careers looking at and studying the surficial geology of the state came together and made this map.

Carson said that mapping is one angle of what WGNHS does. He said they do this because the mapping has value for the people in the counties. He explained that the maps help entities like county boards, highway departments and zoning departments understand how to use the land most responsibly. He cited examples such as determining where to site roads, where to permit and not permit CAFOs and where to site landfills. But, he said, the maps are also a jumping off point for doing research.

Driftless Area

Carson told the group that the reason that the Driftless Area is so interesting to him is because it was never covered by any of the comings and goings of glaciers over the past 2.5 billion years. He explained that there have been numerous glaciations in North America during that time period, and that geologists aren't even sure how many there were. But for a variety of reasons, none of them covered over the Driftless Area.

"And so what we see is this landscape that's much, much older. We see landscape that's been evolving for millions of years. And it's this sort of window into an old landscape that I sort of pair my geologic mapping with geologic research to

understanding the geologic history of the area," Carson explained. "Because it is this old surface, and because, unlike the rest of Wisconsin that's buried under young glacial sediment, here we have a lot of the bedrock very near the surface."

Carson showed the group a "stratigraphic" image, depicting all the layers of rock present in the state of Wisconsin, from oldest to youngest. He said that you would never actually see all these different rock layers in one place as is depicted in the image he showed. He said the oldest rock layers would only be seen up north, and the very youngest only in an area near Milwaukee.

"Right here in the Kickapoo Valley, the oldest rocks are a rock called the Wonewoc Sandstone. The place you'd see this is, if you go up toward Ontario and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, and go out on the river, the sort of vertical walls of rock right at the river level," Carson said. "The youngest rocks are a formation of rock called the St. Peter formation. It's a sandstone also, and if you wanted to see this, you'd actually have to go up to the top of the landscape. So, up on top of the ridge to the east of here, you'll sometimes see ledges or outcrops of rocks, and that's the St. Peter."

Ancient layers

Carson said the rock layers in the Driftless Area represents an era from about 520 million years ago to just under 470 million years.

Carson zoomed in on a draft of the new geologic bedrock map for Crawford County. He said that narrow, dark squiggles on the ridgetops show where there is St. Peter sandstone. He said the map depicts the most abundant of the various layers either as a brick pattern (dolomite/limestone), or a pattern of small dots (sandstone), or as a pattern of dashes (shale). These rocks are all from what geologists describe as the "Cambrian" and "Ordovician" time periods.

"One of the things about the dolomite/limestone and sandstone layers of rocks is that they transmit quite a bit of water, and how they transmit the water varies on what type of rock it is," Carson said. "The one we're really interested in is the limestones/dolomites, and the reason for that is that that kind of rock is probably about the only sedimentary rock we have that is easily dissolved."

Carson said that "easily dissolved" in a geologic sense means that if you apply a weak acid to it, like rainwater, which is a very weak acid, it will dissolve over geologic time. Through the course of time, it will tend to form caves and cavern systems within it.

"So, when we see caves, they always occur in these limestones and dolomites. And when you have cave systems that get close to the Earth's surface, you start to have interactions between those caverns and the surface above," Carson explained.

"And that is fundamentally sinkholes. You either have the rock dissolving to form a conduit down into the cave, or if the cave gets too close to the Earth's surface, the roof of it will collapse and the sediment on top will collapse down. And so we get sinkholes that form in that way."

Carson pointed out a prevalent layer of dolomite on the map that makes up the top of the landscape. He said that layer is called Prairie du Chien dolomite.

"So all the high surfaces in the

county are this limestone that dissolves to form caverns, that dissolves to form sinkholes," Carson said. "And if you were to go up into Vernon County, the amount of area that's covered by that rock is actually quite a bit bigger. Think about if you drive up to Viroqua, there's big, flat, open areas up there. And those are areas where we tend to have the karst forming. The other thing that is important is that water flows through limestones and dolomites. It does it by dissolving it, and opening canyons and caverns that the water can flow through."

Carson said that water tends to flow very easily through another very common rock layer in the Driftless Area -- the sandstones. He said that water moves through sandstone in a different way because it can't dissolve the sandstone, so it just flows in the microscopic pore space between the sand grains.

"So we have two different rock layers here that are very, very good at transmitting water," Carson said. "Shale, a third and less abundant rock layer, is very, very poor at transmitting water, and that's because its particles of mud that are flat and they're smashed together to form a rock. There's just no space for water to flow through. And so if we have groundwater flowing through this rock, water will be stopped in its downward motion, and moves along the top of that shale until it finds a place where it hits the earth's surface, and then you get a spring."

A look back in time

Carson said that five million years ago, the Great Lakes did not yet exist. They were carved out by glaciers in the last 2.5 million years. He said that five million years ago, you would have seen the Missouri and the Mississippi rivers. The Mississippi flowed more through the middle of the state of Illinois, and was stopped to the north by the land formation known as "Military Ridge." He said the ridge is what is known as a "continental drainage divide," dividing water from water that flows one way and into one part of the ocean, from water that flows in opposite direction into an opposite body of water. So the Mississippi, according to Carson, only drained into the Gulf of Mexico from about just south of Dubuque.

"Five million years ago, on what is the Lower Wisconsin River today, which flows to the west, we had a river that flowed to the east," Carson said. "So, the valley of the lower Wisconsin River was carved by a river that flowed to the east, and was part of a large river system that my colleagues and I have come to call the Wyalusing River."

Carson said that other geologists in West Virginia and Pennsylvania had documented similar flow patterns for a river that existed five million years ago, which geologists call the "Pittsburgh River." That river and the Wyalusing River joined up to form a giant river system that flowed up into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and then into the North Atlantic Ocean.

Like big bath tubs

Essentially, all of the rivers formed enormous lakes on the margins of the glaciers. The one in the Driftless Area in what is now the valley of the Lower Wisconsin River is called Lake Muscoda by geologists.

"You can think of the lakes as big bathtubs with the drain blocked and the water running," Carson explained. "The downstream end of the valley is blocked by ice, and so it's going to keep filling up until it finds the lowest place to spill over somewhere."

Carson said that glacial Lake Muscoda spilled over at Wyalusing, and cut a deep new path in the breach, and oriented the water to flow to the south, join the Mississippi River, and flow toward the Gulf of Mexico.

Modern history

The Kickapoo River is sort of the "King River" in the Driftless Area, Carson explained. It's the biggest of the rivers, and it's actually got some processes about it, geologically, that

make it quite unique.

Carson said that areas like the abandoned meanders of the Kickapoo River surrounding the high rock outcrop that makes up the Hogback State Natural Area are one of the unique things about the Kickapoo River Valley. He said the meanders are places where the river used to flow until it cut a shorter path.

"Part of the reason the Kickapoo River has abandoned former meanders and cut a new path is the history of the Lower Wisconsin River reversing its direction," Carson explained. When the Lower Wisconsin reversed its direction, there was a lot of down cutting into the bedrock by the river. So, the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers beds were much deeper than what you see today. On

the Mississippi and the Wisconsin, there are a lot of places with 150 or 200 feet of sand and gravel before you get to the bedrock floor of the valley. And the same thing happened here on the Kickapoo near Steuben. Here, cores taken by his team have shown that it is about 97 feet from the surface to the bedrock floor of the valley.

"So as spectacular as you think the topography is and the depth of this valley is, just think about probably 30,000 years ago, it was another 100 feet to get down to the bottom of the valley," Carson said. "So it was even that much more spectacular."

Carson explained that during the period where the east-flowing Wyalusing River was dammed by the glacier, water had backed up into

the valleys of tributary rivers like the Kickapoo and Pine rivers, forming small lakes. He said that cores revealing lake sediments taken in areas like the Hogback State Natural Area document the existence of these lakes.

He said that sand terraces, like the one that the new part of Gays Mills sits on, were formed during glacial times when the climate was much colder, and permafrost killed all the vegetation that held soil in place and protected the bedrock. Precipitation in those times eroded the top layers of sandstone, and sent massive quantities of sand down the river. The sand filled up the river bed, and was blown by the prevailing wind from the west onto the east side of the valley.

West Fork residents form watershed council

By Gillian Pomplun

Of the two watersheds impacted by failure of flood control dams following heavy rains in August 2018, Coon Creek has fielded a robust watershed council, recently celebrating its fourth anniversary. The West Fork Kickapoo River has had some starts and stops, but now seems to have regrouped and brought a promising group of concerned citizens together.

The new group held its third public meeting recently in Bloomingdale, which drew about 20 citizens. The topic for the evening was surface water. At previous meetings, they had discussed the Vernon County Landfill and groundwater issues in the watershed.

The group operates very informally, but discussed taking steps to increase their public presence and start to accept donations, and possibly grant funding down the road. They agreed to open a checking account, and are interested in learning more about the benefits of joining the non-profit Hill Country Watershed Alliance.

One reason they want to begin to accept donations is to help defray the cost of comprehensive water quality testing of private wells in the Seas Branch tributary of the West Fork, which lies below the Vernon County Landfill in the watershed.

"We started with the well of former Vernon County Board Chairman Dennis Brault," watershed council member Tom Lukens told the group. "They live in the Seas Branch tributary area, and both he and his wife have severe health problems."

Lukens said he helped the Braults sample for the homeowners package (coliform bacteria and nitrate) and the PFAS test. He said that getting the PFAS test results back has been very slow. He said he'd also had a company come out to collect a sample for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) which is a very technical process.

Lukens said he had secured agreement from three other landowners in the sub-watershed to sample their wells, and said that would be happening in the near future.

Surface water

The group conducted a round robin, where each person talked about what they're seeing in the surface water in the watershed, either on their land, or just generally. Issues ranged from beavers to wetland restoration to erosion and runoff issues.

Vernon County Conservation Director Dave Hettenbach, who lives in the North Fork of the Bad Axe River Watershed, attended the meeting. Hettenbach is seen frequently at meetings of all the different watershed councils operating in the county. He provided a couple of West Fork Kickapoo River updates to the group.

First, Hettenbach described a project in progress at the breached Jersey Valley Dam. He said that the county is partnering with DNR on the project designed, which is designed to lower water temperatures in the West Fork below the dam to protect the world-class trout fishery.

"The DNR was really worried about stream temperatures in the West Fork, and its impact on trout fishing," Hettenbach said. "With there being some impounded water remaining behind the breached Jersey Valley Dam, the concern is that the water is sitting and warming, and that is impacting the health of trout in the West Fork below the dam."

Hettenbach said that DNR Fisheries Biologist Kirk Olson was involved in the project. Reached after the meeting, Olson had this to say about the project:

"About a year ago, we discovered that the partial pond, which was being held back by the Jersey Valley Dam, was substantially warming downstream waters, up to 10 degrees during some time periods, and impacting trout and other coldwater fish downstream. Since then, we've been working closely with Vernon County to fix the problem.

"We started by opening the gates to reduce the water level as much as possible. Unfortunately, several large and shallow pools remained and continued to warm the water. In an attempt to fix this problem, we've been creating a new channel that runs along the bed of the old lake using an excavator. Once a flowing channel is restored, water temperatures should cool and be more suitable for trout downstream. Since we started, we've already been able to reduce the size of the remaining ponds, and expose a large spring that was on the bed of Jersey Valley Lake. When I measured the spring on an 80-degree day it was running at 48-degrees. Given the size of the spring and receiving stream, I'd expect that, in natural conditions, the stream would actually be cooling through this reach.

"We have temperature loggers located up and downstream that we will be operating through the rest of this fall and next year to document water temperature changes. We will



CO-CHAIRS OF THE WEST FORK KICKAPOO WATERSHED COUNCIL

Lars Bergen and Anna Jo Doerr are co-chairs of the newly reinvigorated West Fork Kickapoo Watershed Council. The group recently held its third public meeting at the Bloomingdale Community Center on the banks of the West Fork.

also repeat fisheries surveys that have been completed up and downstream of the dam. Our goal is to see less warming through this reach than we did prior to the project, which will benefit the important, high-quality trout fishery in the West Fork Kickapoo River, downstream."

Dams, dams, dams

Hettenbach also said that Vernon County is applying for grant funding from the DNR to decommission one or two more flood control dams in the watershed. They recently completed the project to decommission the breached Mlsna Dam in the Knapp Creek tributary of the West Fork.

Hettenbach said the Vernon County Board had passed a resolution authorizing an application for funding to decommission the Jacob-

son and Swenson dams. He said that as soon as the grant application period opens, they will apply. He said that even if grant funding is received, there won't be any "shovels in the dirt" until, probably, 2027.

"Jacobson Dam is very close to here, right off Bloomingdale Road," Hettenbach explained. "This is all part of the NRCS study. The federal government currently hasn't funded any decommissioning yet at this point, so in the meantime, as a county, we're trying to do our due diligence and continue."

Hettenbach said the county's insurance company would like the county to take some action on the federal study that says the dams need to be removed. He said that in lieu of the feds giving the county funding, decommissioning using state funding has been their stopgap approach.





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RECOLLECTIONS

Trouble on the White River

Here is our latest installment in the random series of early adventures from the formative years of Richard Larkin the trout fisherman, fly fisherman, chapter leader and storyteller.

By Richard Larkin

As I inched toward my thirties, the decade of the 80's reared its ugly head, and the following scenario repeated itself with alarming frequency: Some poor guy would schedule a bachelor party or a wedding during the trout season. The plans for one such bachelor party weekend would consist of camping and golf. I hate golf.

The party was to be held in central Wisconsin, near Westfield, on a weekend in late June where the groom had some family land used for grouse and deer hunting. We would camp unsupervised, eat unhealthy food, drink beer, cavort about in nature, and golf at a small country course nearby. I was distraught because as far as I knew, there wasn't much trout fishing nearby.

Trying to make the best of things, which meant avoiding golf as much as possible, I dug around in my "trout files" consisting of my printed maps, books, hand drawn maps and DNR stuff. We were without Internet in those days and trout fishermen, in particular, had to develop keen detective skills for finding trout water.

The "Hex Hatch" stage

Back then, I was deep into the "Hex Hatch"-stage of my trout-fishing development. Fishing in the dark with huge mayfly imitations for large brown trout now consumed me. I had already fished Black Earth Creek, west of Madison with some success, landing an 18-inch brown in the dark. It was an addictive thrill, and I wanted more.

Looking in my map book, I saw Lawrence Creek, which was only a couple of miles from my destination. Per the book, Lawrence Creek had brook and brown trout, but only 1.75 miles of trout water before it drained into Lawrence Lake.

This translated into a limited possibility, and I knew it was time to talk to my buddy, Ray, to see if he knew of any Hex activity there. Ray operated a little neighborhood liquor store with his brother on Milwaukee's northwest side. As far as I could tell, they seemed to know every trout stream in Wisconsin. They would alternate their workdays with trout fishing, with one brother tending the store and the other trout fishing.

Secret trout fisherman's clubhouse

In those days, the back room of the liquor store was a "secret" trout fisherman's clubhouse. Entry to this private conclave was controlled by Ray who would determine who could come into the back room and drink his free beer. I spent many hours in this sacred cloister of trout talk, often staying and listening to the stories until he closed the store. The usual attendees were a collection of characters from his old northside neighborhood, include two old German ex-POW's who stayed on in Milwaukee after WWII and became rabid trout fishermen.

This was my trout college. I stopped in one Friday afternoon and found a good session already taking place. To my amazement, the

topic was the Hex hatch, and they seemed to be talking in hushed, reverential tones. The old guys said the big browns would take them off the surface with audible slurps, accompanied by loud tail splashes. Mostly, they said, you would cast at the noise in the dark. As the trout session progressed, some of the veteran trout fisherman in Ray's back room all began to unload their Hex stories.

With a heavy German accent, one of the old Germans began to weave a tale of a canoe float the two of them took in the 1950's on the legendary White River, which flows through Bayfield County in northwest Wisconsin. He told of the stretch of the White which flows through the Bibon Swamp. It is a true wilderness float.

Starting at dusk, they paddled into miles of tamarack, tag alders, cattail, and into the middle of the swamp, with its deep slow-flowing black water. You were warned never to wade the stream, as it had supposedly bottomless, muck-filled holes which could trap and drown a trout fisherman. You didn't want to flip your canoe, either.

an aerial fight in the dark with an upset bat. It was a hell of a story, and I floated out of the store that night, chasing imaginary monster brown trout.

Later, as the bachelor weekend approached, I went back to the store armed with my trout map book and planned on seeing Ray. Instead, Denny was behind the cash register. Ray was off somewhere, chasing trout. Ray was my partner in crime and the crazy older brother I never had. Denny was the kind, sensible older brother I never had either. Ray provided the excitement. Denny provided reliable information.

"Ever fish Lawrence Creek near Westfield?"

"Sure," he said. "Real clear. Mostly small brookies with some browns as you get downstream toward the little lake. Fished it years back. Good stream. Kinda small."

"Think it gets a Hex hatch?" I asked.

He smiled. Ray must have told him about the German's White River story session with me, the bug-eyed kid, paying rapt attention.

"Probably not, but I don't know for sure. I mean those flies will

once. We got some nice ones." He reached behind the counter for his heavily marked copy of the trout map book, flipping to Waushara County. "It looks to be about 20 miles east of Westfield."

My jubilation returned. There would be no golf. Instead, I would go catch some big brown trout.

I headed north on a Friday afternoon, hoping to reach the White around dusk. Then, after exhausting myself on massive brown trout, I would join the boys in Westfield for a few beers and some bratwurst. The next morning I'd head back to fish either the White or Lawrence Creek and rejoin the boys after their golf day. I had it all figured out. No golf.

Perfect conditions

Around dusk I found a section of river that Denny had circled on my map. I waded up, strung up my trusty Wonderod, attached my stoutest leader and tied on a newly purchased Hex fly. Frogs and other night creatures started starting joining in the chorus that darkness brings. Conditions seemed perfect as I walked quietly along the streambank, searching for a slow mucky pool.

I found the first pool Denny had circled on the map. There current was slow and the pool had a calm surface. It was like a mirror, and it reflected the first few stars which now appeared. I walked quietly to the far downstream side so I could position myself to cast upstream into the deepest portion of the pool. I thought the Hex would emerge there and begin hatching into mature mayflies, fly skyward, mate and flutter back to the surface to lay their eggs. It would be an all-you-can-eat buffet for the big browns.

I waited for what seemed like a very long time. Bats began to swoop about the pool, feeding on any insects flying over the pool. At first, there were no signs of rising fish in the failing light. Then, I heard a big slurp, but I still couldn't see any big yellow mayflies.

I was using some big Hex imitations that I'd purchased at the only fly shop I knew of near Milwaukee, and which cost me about \$10 — a big expenditure in those days. Rewarded, I began to see numbers of large mayflies appearing in the dying of the light. They fluttered down and alighted softly in the pool. "Slurp!" went a good-sized trout. This was followed quickly by another, then another. Excited, I began to cast.

More big mayflies began to flutter down, and the trout became even more active with louder and more aggressive splashes and slurps. Numbers of good-sized trout were now rising loudly in the pool. I began to cast in earnest, but my casting fell short of where the fish were feeding. I was becoming frustrated.

In the fast-fading light I saw a long dark log, lying parallel to the bank at the head of the pool. It was just upstream from a gentle riffle at the head of the pool. I was pretty sure I saw a big fish rising next to that log, followed by another.

See **HEX**, page 15



YEARS LATER, HE STILL HASN'T LEARNED HIS LESSON

For some reason, Author Richard Larkin still enjoys fishing the hex hatch.

It sounded scary as hell with descriptions of howling wolves, coyotes, hooting owls, bats which flew at your face. Deer would loudly crash off into the swamp when you paddled by in the dark. Thick hordes of biting black flies and blood-thirsty mosquitoes completed the picture. Once, he said a black bear jumped into the stream just in front of the canoe and crashed off into the cattails.

He continued, saying the Hexes were thick that night and they caught many large brown trout, too many to count. He said 20-inchers were typical and they lost several larger trout. He described straightened hooks, snapped leaders and the large Hex flies flying back and hitting you in your face when you missed a hook set. He also said he snagged a muskrat and later got a bat. I grinned as I imagined him in

hatch in pretty much any trout stream where there is some muck bottom. Lawrence is pretty clear, and I don't remember much muck bottom. You need the muck for those big mayflies," he said.

What about the White?

I was downcast and likely relegated to playing golf. My dreams of the Hex hatch were circling the proverbial drain. Maybe little Lawrence Creek and its smaller trout might have to suffice. Denny thought for a minute and rubbed his chin and asked.

"What about the White?"

"Isn't that the one way up north in Bayfield County? I asked.

"No, the one near Wautoma. That shouldn't be too far from Westfield. It has a Hex hatch and it's pretty famous. Ray and I fished it

Right place, right people, right time

Sometimes the right place and the right people come together at exactly the right time to create a stream restoration project that is truly remarkable.

By Peter Jonas,
TUDARE Partnership Specialist

Sometimes the right place and the right people come together at exactly the right time to create a stream restoration project that is truly remarkable.

The place is 7,200 feet of the North Branch of Wilson Creek in Dunn County, on the properties of Bill Manwarren and Josh Edhlund.

Wilson Creek, like many Driftless Area streams, was straightened to increase the land available for agriculture and improve efficiency with large machinery. Straightened streams often become featureless, impaired waterways with little habitat and few fish.

"I tried fishing Wilson Creek several times when I first purchased the property (in 1995)," Manwarren recalls. "I caught some trout but found the creek hard to fish and it seemed there were just a few trout. The beaver dams slowed the stream flow and created a soft bottom that was difficult to wade in. The trees made it very difficult to cast and walk the stream banks."

Could the damage be undone?

Could the damage done to Wilson Creek be undone to give this portion of the stream a new lease on life? The answer turns out to be yes, if you can gather the right people to get the job done.

Through an impressive collaborative effort between the landowners, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the DNR and TU, this stretch of Wilson Creek is being completely remeandered utilizing large portions of its original channel. The project is taking place in two phases. The first was completed in August of 2025 and the second will begin in the fall of 2025 and be completed in 2026.

"I was surprised at the scale of the overall project," said Dale Dahlke, a neighbor of Manwarren and Edhlund and a member of the Wisconsin Clear Waters TU board. "It's pretty impressive—not the kind of thing that's done often." The project will restore 1.36 miles of stream. Several hundred feet on each side of the bank are being converted to permanent sod, either as restored wetland, native prairie grass or horse/hay pasture.

Potential was there

Dahlke saw potential in these properties several years ago and spoke to DNR Senior Fisheries Biologist Kasey Yallaly, not long after Yallaly arrived at the Baldwin field office. Yallaly began conversations with Manwarren, and Dahlke showed him other restoration projects completed on Wilson Creek. This relationship building resulted in the DNR purchasing a perpetual fishing easement from Manwarren. Manwarren later sold a portion of

neighbor's property, the willingness to open their streambanks to public fishing can become contagious. "Kudos to Dale, who restored the stream on his property. It became the talk of the town and got things rolling. The landowners like what is happening," said NRCS District Conservationist John Sippl.

Shortly after the easement was completed, conversations began among the landowners, Natural Resources Conservation Service and DNR staff. The many technical, practical and financial challenges that needed to be addressed are a

solutions for all of the challenges, but it didn't happen overnight. Technical skills and people skills were necessary to arrive at a plan. "Communication is number one," said DeWyre. You have to have the right landowner to meander a ditched stream. Many farmers want straight fields, and I get that. We worked through three different design options with the two landowners to arrive at the final design."

NRCS District Conservationist John Sippl built a strong working relationship with Manwarren over many years, so the stream restoration project is integrated with many previous projects on his property that reduce erosion and improve water quality. "I have been working with Bill for several years on upland management, including cover crops and no-till. He chose to take his highly erodible land out of production and put it into CRP."

According to DeWyre, Sippl's collaboration skills were the real key to making this project happen. "John does a great job managing NRCS relationships with other government agencies. In the last 10-15 years he has built trust with the local people, private landowners and the DNR."

Characteristically, Sippl deflected credit away from himself and toward other people collaborating on the project. "The DNR and NRCS have a working relationship built and forged many years ago, so there is a lot of mutual respect. Nate and Kasey (Senior DNR Fisheries Biologists Nate Anderson and Yallaly) work well together with Chad in implementing everyone's ideas into a stream design. Nobody's ego is at play, and there is mutual respect."

"It has always been a dream to get the trout stream restored," Manwarren said.

"My wife and I bought the property as a place to enjoy nature and wildlife. I'm a fisherman and we like anglers, so we think the stream restoration project is a great fit for the property. The NRCS and DNR staff impressed me with their ideas and plans for enhancing the stream for trout and were very receptive to my concerns while planning the project. I am amazed by the plan they developed and the stream they created."

An influx of conservation dollars due to the implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act made 2025 the perfect time to begin this large-sale project. Phase one on the Man-



Sara Strassman

CREEK THROUGH EDHLUND PROPERTY, PRIOR TO RESTORATION

Prior to restoration, the Manwarren and Edhlund properties on the North Branch of Wilson Creek featured a straightened channel with the riparian area full of invasive grasses and trees.

the property to Edhlund with the easement still in place.

Conversations with neighbors were a significant factor in persuading Manwarren to sign a fishing easement. "Many friends and family cautioned me on opening the property to public fishing, but I wasn't too concerned about public fishing. Being a fisherman myself made me comfortable with having a fisherman on my land," he said.

"I met Dale Dahlke when I participated on the Wilson Creek watershed project. Dale signed a fishing easement and was impressed with how it enhanced the trout fishing after the improvements. Another neighbor, Dave Klingman, signed an easement, and I helped clean off the trees on his stream. Dave shared his experiences on working with the NRCS and DNR."

When landowners see the results of a stream restoration project on a

great case study of why the planning and design phase of an ambitious restoration project can take years, while the construction phase only takes a few months.

Questions to consider

The first question NRCS Soil Conservation Engineer Chad DeWyre asks when considering if it is feasible to remeander a straightened stream is, "Can I put this stream back into its old channel?" If the answer is "yes," additional questions follow: Could a design be developed to ensure that the stream bed would remain stable against the stress and velocity of the current utilizing a minimal amount of rock? Could the stream be routed in a way that ensured one landowner wouldn't lose land to the other? And finally, could a project of this scale be successfully funded?

Eventually, the partners found



Paul Krahn

STRAIGHTENED STREAM CHANNEL FILLED IN

The black line to the left represents the location of the former straightened stream channel, which has now been filled in. The blue line highlights where the new channel crosses the formerly straightened channel.



Peter Jonas

NORTH BRANCH WILSON CREEK PROJECT TAKING SHAPE

TUDARE Manager Sara Strassman and NRCS District Conservationist John Sippl confer on the North Branch of Wilson Creek construction site.

warren property was funded through the Environmental Quality Initiatives Program (EQIP) program and Wisconsin Trout Stamp dollars.

Because inflation Reduction Act dollars are no longer available, phase two in 2026 is being funded through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) established between the NRCS and Trout Unlimited's Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TUDARE) and Trout Stamp dollars.

Phase two is already underway with tree clearing on the Edhlund property beginning this fall and construction continuing next spring. In addition to remeandering the stream, the second phase will include a 25-acre wetland restoration.

"Long-term, the RCPP is the way we are going to continue stream restoration work," according to Sippl. In my opinion, federal funding through EQIP will be more and more limited. A lot of people are utilizing that money for wetland restoration, pollinator plantings and goat prairies. RCPP dollars are designated strictly toward trout."

Native grasses and forbs are flourishing

In addition to the right place, people and time all coming together on the North Branch of Wilson Creek, a little bit of fairy dust seems to have been sprinkled onto the construction site at the very end.

All of the resource professionals involved have been pleasantly surprised by the speed with which native grasses and forbs are reestablishing themselves, post-construction.

Prior to the work being done, the stream bank was a typical mix of



Sara Strassman

HETH AND SIPPL DISCUSS THE STATUS OF THE PROJECT

Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter President Bill Heth discusses the restoration project on the North Branch of Wilson Creek with NRCS District Conservationist John Sippl.

non-native Reed Canary Grass and other European species. Sippl speculates that driving the excavator and haul trucks back and forth over the site during the construction phase crimped off the non-native grasses and suppressed their vigor.

The buffer area around the stream is filling in with native prairie woolgrass, sedges, bulrushes, Joe Pye weed, marsh milkweed, skunk cabbage and other natives from

seeds lying dormant in the soil.

"The native vegetation in the seedbank got an opportunity to express itself and flourished," Sippl said.

The way things have come together on this project, it's only natural that the people involved are very excited about how the site will develop in the future.

"I am anxious to see what the stream looks like in a year after the

vegetation establishes and the stream narrows up and gains depth," said DeWyre. "Kasey did a pre-construction fish survey. I can't wait to see the post-construction survey."

"I look forward to introducing fly fishing to my grandkids and learning more fly-fishing techniques. I am also looking forward to talking with the fishermen as they fish the creek," Manwarren said.



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Great Lakes Restoration Update

By Chris Collier, Great Lakes Program Manager

As this edition of *Wisconsin Trout* reaches your mailboxes, the TU Northwoods Team is putting the finishing touches on another successful field season.

While completing our final 2025 projects, we're also looking ahead to 2026 by drafting contracts for upcoming work, acquiring permits and submitting final grant applications to support our plans.

Aquatic-organism-passage

Aquatic-organism-passage projects, which are often culvert replacements, were once again a big part of our summer. This year we worked with partners to replace three crossings that created full barriers for fish movement.

The first was a county highway crossing on Elvoy Creek in Vilas County that reconnected more than four miles of stream. Our second project was a private road crossing on Chuks Creek, a tributary to the Border Brule River in Forest County that reconnected more than a mile of aquatic habitat. The third and final project for 2025 was completed in September on Crossett Creek in Florence County. This reconnected more than five miles of trout stream habitat.

These fish passage projects are the foundation of our northern Wisconsin program, but our work didn't stop there.

Projects on White, Marengo rivers

Our newest staff member, Katti, hit the ground running with several projects. She partnered with the DNR and the Wild Rivers Chapter to complete a tree planting on the White River in Bayfield County to continue restoring habitat in the DNR's White River Fishery Area.

With support from a private donor, she was able to partner with the Friends of the Lincoln Community Forest, Landmark Conservancy, the Wild Rivers Chapter, and the DNR to install several large-wood habitat structures in the Marengo River to kick-start wood habitat recruitment following the 2016 and 2018 floods.

Lastly, she helped the U.S. Forest Service improve habitat in Whiskey Creek by installing stream-bed substrate in a culvert impacted by the 2016 and 2018 floods. By "helping" I mean she rented and ran the heavy equipment to install the new streambed at a time when the Forest Service did not have funding to support that work. If Katti could do all of this with less than eight months on the job, I can't wait to see what comes next.



MORE THAN A MILE OF STREAM RECONNECTED WITH NEW BOX CULVERT
A new concrete box culvert installed on Chuks Creek in Forest County reconnected more than a mile of trout stream.



THIS CULVERT ON ELVOY CREEK IN VILAS COUNTY RECONNECTS MORE THAN FOUR MILES OF STREAM

Monitoring, science projects

Danielle, Katti and our seasonal team, with some support from Scott Allen and I, have been hard at work on our monitoring and science projects. We've completed inventories on the road-stream crossings in the White River and Fish Creek watersheds in Ashland and Bayfield counties. This data is part of a large partner effort in the region to identify crossings that create fish passage issues and increase flood hazard risks. The inventories will be used to help identify high-value projects to reconnect habitat and build flood resilience.

The team has also completed another season of brook trout monitoring at our culvert project sites and added a few future project locations to the effort this year. Katti launched a temperature monitoring program on Muskeg Creek that is part of a larger habitat restoration project, and she will share the details of that project in a future article.

Our monitoring team is nearing completion of the first year of a standardized coaster brook trout protocol across Lake Superior's south-shore streams. This collaborative effort brings together Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners to advance our scientific understanding of coaster brook trout populations in the Lake Superior basin.

Engagement and outreach

On the engagement and outreach front, Danielle and Scott joined forces with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Partners Program and the Natural Resources Foundation to host a field trip at the Wedde Creek stream habitat restoration project completed two years ago.

This project is in the Central Sands region, and Scott and Danielle have done an amazing job showing how partnerships between non-profits, landowners and federal programs can be a major win for trout and cold-water health.

Central Sands Celebration

Another event this field season was the Central Sands Celebration that Jamie and the TU CARES leaders pulled together. That event was highlighted in the last issue of *Trout*, but I had to bring it up again because it was a rousing success, and the work that Jamie and TU CARES did deserves another shout out. Also, we recently learned that we received another round of funding from Bell's Brewing which will support another Central Sands event (and one other in a to-be-determined location).

Donors, supporters and partners make it possible

All this work was made possible due to funding from federal, state and private sources. The 2025 field season was supported by competitive grants and contributions from the Fund for Lake Michigan, Brico Fund, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Florence County, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, We Energies Mitigation and Enhancement Fund, the Wisconsin DNR, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and others.

Special recognition goes to the northern Wisconsin TU chapters, Wisconsin state council, and TU CARES chapters for their generous contributions that directly supported our 2025 programs. Your commitment to conservation makes this important work possible.

Learn more, join in

Even with the 2025 field season closing, there are plenty of opportunities for you to learn more about our projects and find ways to join in. Feel free to email me at chris.collier@tu.org if you'd like to check out some of this work, pitch us project ideas, or invite one of our team members to do a presentation at a chapter meeting.

I hope you all had a great summer and are enjoying the fall weather that accompanies the final days of another inland trout season.



TUNNEL VISION
Katti Renik installs stream-bed substrate with the U.S. Forest Service on Whiskey Creek.

A summer they'll always remember

TU Great Lakes Techs share their favorite routines from the summer field season.

By Willow Pingel and Tyler Olson

Across 12 watersheds in two counties, the TU Great Lakes Northern Wisconsin team visited nearly 300 road-stream crossings during the summer to assess bridges and culverts for potential barriers to fish passage and to evaluate their flood resiliency. Our crew was four strong this year, with Tyler Olson of Oshkosh taking the lead and managing the chaos that Willow Pingel of Kendall, Nolan Feasel of Madison and Monika Urban of Fort Collins, Colorado did their best to create. Ashland and Bayfield counties treated us well this year with many great streams, scenic views of Lake Superior and no significant weather events, like those that washed out roads and flooded campgrounds last year.

We quickly developed a weekly routine that involved road-stream crossing inventories all morning, visiting specific restaurants for dinner, such as the Deep Water Grille in Ashland on Mondays and Patsy's Bar & Grill in Washburn all other days of the week. We saw a movie in Ashland every Tuesday, put together puzzles after dinner and had campfires most evenings. Since most of our campgrounds were on the water, we spent plenty of time fishing. We all came to the dock with different fishing skill levels, but we helped each other improve and learn.

After all the inventories were completed and submitted to the Great Lakes Stream Crossing Inventory Dashboard, our summer shifted to stream surveys and habitat assessments. We electro-shocked several streams in the Eagle River and Wabeno areas to get data on the abundance of brook trout before and after significant dam removal or culvert replacement projects. Some of our favorite days were shocking the North and South branches of the Oconto River near Wabeno and Brule Springs up in Eagle River.

As the summer went on, our little crew began to dissolve as our two youngest members, Monika and Nolan, needed to return to school. While their presence is greatly missed, we've been busy writing reports and assisting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with electro-shocking surveys. We are also looking forward to working on coaster brook trout surveys later in the fall. This work will be done in streams that flow into Lake Superior to gain a better understanding of how and where coaster brook trout are migrating during the fall spawning season. We can't wait to see what projects next summer brings.



TECHS VISITED MORE THAN 300 ROAD-STREAM CROSSINGS
...across 12 watersheds in two counties this past summer.

HEX, from page 11

At least two good fish were under that log, and I inched closer. But I still could not reach it.

Inching upstream, I waded even deeper into the pool. The muck grew thicker and deeper, but I didn't notice it much. I was keyed on the two big fish. My cast finally reached the spot just above the log. I let the big fly float along, parallel to the log. A big splash and I raised the rod. The fly came whistling back, right by my cheek. Missed! I cast several more times. Finally, there was another big splash, and I set the hook. Fish on! It was a good one!

It was a very good trout. It fought much harder than the 18-inch fish from Black Earth Creek. The big fish surged its way through the pool, violently shaking its head as it bore to the bottom. I remembered from my first big Black Earth fish that you can feel a big trout's entire body as it swims with an almost snake-like motion as it tries to shake you off. Little trout wriggle violently, big trout slither.

Stuck in the muck

The old Wonderod held the fish firmly and prevented him from taking too much line. That was until the fish reversed direction and shot by me, swimming downstream like a runaway train. I turned to take up the slack line and stripped furiously. I knew then I was going to have to chase the big fish downstream if I was to have any hope of landing it. I tried to lift my foot and turn around. I couldn't move. I was stuck fast in the muck.

The big trout was heading rapidly downstream, and was now taking more line. I twisted in my waders like a wrestler. I tried squirming free while fighting the fish at the same time.

I was really stuck, and the more I struggled, the deeper I sank. I felt like I was sliding toward the bottom of the pool. The fish was still hooked, and I tried to fight him in while trying to pump my feet like I was in a marching band. This only made matters worse. I just sank deeper. Now, cold water began to trickle over the top of my waders,

and I began to realize the danger I was in. I needed a plan, and fast.

I gave up on landing the big trout and now concentrated on saving both my gear and my sorry hide. My attempts to free myself were failing and my waders were now rapidly filling with ice cold water. Desperate, I tossed my precious flyrod with the hooked trout into the bushes up on the bank. Maybe, the big fish would stay hooked, and I'd get him later.

Free of my rod, I concentrated on freeing myself. My waders were the old canvas type with big, cleated boots. A nylon safety belt held out much of the cold water which had now filled the upper parts of my waders. Struggling and squirming even harder, I tried to kick loose from the sticky thigh-deep muck which still held me firmly to the bottom.

Nothing worked. I was now over the top of the waders and both legs were starting to fill with ice cold water. I thought of the old Tarzan movies where somebody falls into quicksand and dramatically expires as they are sucked under. Now desperate, I loosened the belt and wiggled out of the suspenders. The waders filled completely. Now soaked in muddy icy water, I kept struggling, trying to work my way out with a mix of kicking, rolling, and finally a sort of backstroke. Now, only my head was above the water.

Propelled by adrenaline and pure panic I finally slid out of the waders and paddled toward the nearest bank. Now free, I crawled to safety, grabbing the branches of bushes and clumps of grass to hoist myself up the slippery bank.

At least I wasn't dead

I lay on the bank, wet, shivering and panting heavily. I was completely soaked and covered with slimy smelly muck. I felt like a gigantic, exhausted muskrat. But at least I wasn't dead!

My waders remained on the bottom of the creek. My flyrod was lost, along with my fish, my vest, and my hat. I also lost my fly box, net, and my newly purchased Hex flies. I even lost my socks. I checked my pants pockets. I had my wallet and

truck keys. Dripping wet and now cold, I struggled to my feet.

I had to get back to the truck. Wet, cold, and barefoot in the dark woods I struggled along the streambank, sometimes crawling on my hands and knees. It took a long while, and I slowly worked my way down the muddy fisherman's path which paralleled the creek. The worst and probably least important part of this terrifying experience was trying to walk down the gravel country road barefoot for the last few yards to reach the truck. It was a slow, painful shuffle. I don't know how farm kids can do this.

I returned to the bachelor camp anticipating a bunch of guys drinking beer and eating bratwurst. My old chevy pickup slowly rolled toward camp. I checked my watch. It was now past midnight.

The scene at the camp was not what I expected. It was quiet. The revelers had gone into their tents or were sitting quietly out by the campfire. The party had apparently run out of steam.

Now in dry clothes, I fished a lukewarm bratwurst out of a bowl full of sauerkraut and found a bun. I poured a beer and heated the leftover brat over the dying fire. The bratwurst was delicious. The beer was flat, but I didn't care.

The groom-to-be walked out of the woods, visibly plastered, but still able to make complete sentences. He sat down next to me, a little wobbly.

"Get any fish?" he asked.

"Naw, lost a big one," I said and started to tell the most heroic, hair-raising, death-defying trout story ever told. After a while, I looked over and he was sound asleep in his lawn chair and snoring in the fading light of the campfire, I put a blanket over him and walked slowly to the back of my truck, crawled into the bed and went to sleep.

Nothing but a sock

In the morning, I drove back to the White to find my flyrod, gear, and maybe the biggest brown trout of my life. I walked back into the woods to the stream to the near-fatal muck hole. The vegetation next to the hole looked trampled and broken like some sort of hog wal-

low. The pool was not as large as I remembered. The water had cleared but I could not see any evidence of my waders on the mucky bottom. I did not feel like going scuba diving.

I looked in the general area where I had tossed my flyrod. It wasn't there. It wasn't anywhere. I could not find my net, my vest, or anything else. It all must have been carried downstream. I looked for my fly line which I thought would show up on the clear stream bottom and hoping it was still somehow attached to the big brown. Everything was gone, save for a bedraggled wet sock, laying on the trail next to the stream.

I expanded the search for my lost rod and lost fish, pulling back the streambank vegetation and looking into every pool. I hoped against all odds there was still the possibility that the big trout was still attached to the line. Maybe, I thought, it dragged the rod into the water and downstream where I could still recover it. I walked a long distance searching both banks and every pool and run, desperately hoping.

I walked the length of the stream several more times and even crawled under the bridge downstream, hoping the rod might be wedged crosswise in the barbed-wire fence underneath. No dice. The rod and the big fish were gone forever.

The big brown probably shook free and lived to fight another day with a scarred jaw for a souvenir. The biggest brown trout of my life was now just a fish story. Worse yet was my realization that without my flyrod, I would be forced to golf.

So, I golfed, spending the day slicing, hooking, shanking, triple- and quadruple-putting, finding every water hazard and deep rough, and losing golf balls at a pace which rivaled my skills at losing flies.

I comforted myself with the following thought: "I am going to buy one of those new graphite rods. I heard they cast much farther. If I buy one, I won't have to wade in so damn deep the next time I fish the Hex hatch!"

I think only trout fishermen think like this.

Cabin Fever Day

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Dirty Dozen

A seasoned angler decides to create his own list of the best 12 flies.



AUTHOR WITH RAINBOW CAUGHT ON A GRIFFITHS GNAT

By Tom Meyer

Fishing is not and should not be a competition. I despise fishing tournaments and they make me think of the famous Ted Williams quote, “I object to fishing tournaments less for what they do to fish than what they do to fishermen.”

Fishing tournaments for me are in the same category as eating contests, like the annual one where the winner stuffs down over 70 hot dogs! A friend of mine, who has since passed away, used to call those events “buffoonery.” Sure, we all do some fish counting, but I don’t need to catch a lot of fish in order to have what I consider a successful day of fishing.

Of course, I would always rather catch a lot of fish than no fish, but even no-fish days are enjoyable for all the other reasons we fish. At my age I do not care what anyone thinks about my fishing skills. I am past the point of having to prove anything.

We’ve all heard guys bragging about having a 50-fish day. How many fish do you need to catch in a day? I have never had a 50-fish day trout fishing. Dave Whitlock once suggested that maybe one should stop fishing after catching 30 trout in a day in order to give them a rest.

If you’re fishing on different stretches of a river with a friend, of course you’re going to report how many fish you caught and the size in order to dial in on what the best method is and what flies are working. I usually avoid numbers and reply to those “how many...” questions with “I had a great day” or “I caught some fish.”

I am not embarrassed to get skunked. That happens, even on my home waters in Central Wisconsin.

One thing that has always interested me is fly choice. Maybe I am just a fly geek, but I love talking flies with anyone. I will even share hatch information, although not necessarily exact locations. So, essentially, naming flies, and which ones did or didn’t work

I have always enjoyed those articles by guides and fly-fishing writers about their “top 12 flies you need to have in your box” or something on that order. The “top 12” will be different for every fisherman depending on his home waters but also on the experience and likes and dislikes of a given angler.

I initially decided to make one list my top 12 flies for my home waters and a second list for my favorite Driftless Area flies, but once I wrote them down I realized they were essentially the same.

Maybe some day I’ll make list of my best U.P. flies, night-fishing flies, hex-fishing flies, western U.S. flies or Great Lakes

trib steelhead flies. There are some flies that are standard and have proven to be effective everywhere that trout swim. I think it’s fun to compare. A few years back, my friend Duke Welter donated several sets of his top 12 flies he called the “Dirty Dozen” to various TU fundraisers. I am stealing that term for the title of this article. Everyone comes from a different mindset and has had different experiences from which they form their opinions. There are no right or wrong choices and that’s the great thing about this passion we have for fly fishing. For what it’s worth, here are my top-12 favorite flies, in no particular order.



THIS BROWN TROUT PROVES WHY THE FOAM HOPPER MADE THE LIST

My Dirty Dozen

- Blue Wing Olive
- Elk Hair Caddis
- Parachute Adams
- Royal Coachman
- Griffith’s Gnat
- Black Woolly Bugger
- Emu Bugger
- Pink Squirrel
- PT Midge
- Caddis Pupa
- Black Foam Beetle
- Foam Hopper

It was tough to decide whether to leave out a pine-squirrel-zonker streamer, a black caddis pattern, foam ant pattern and a parachute midge dry fly, but if forced to only pick 12 this would be my choice. I also love to fish Muddler Minnows and Hornbergs, but had to cut them also. If anyone wants to share their dirty dozen, send me an email and let’s compare favorite flies.

Tom Meyer is a member of the Central Wisconsin Chapter of TU.

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Chapter News

Aldo Leopold Chapter

Thank you to everyone who attended our annual picnic in June. The weather was beautiful and three lucky winners won a grand prize, along with many winners of our bucket raffles. Don Glanzer from Reedsburg won the bamboo fly rod donated by Paul Julius. Steve Kopp from La Crosse won the guided trip from the Driftless Angle and Scott Allen from won the bourbon package. Heading into winter we will again host our Bar Flies fly-tying get-togethers in all three of our counties from December through March.

We'll be at K-D's Bar & Grill in Lodi on Tuesday nights December 9, January 13, February 10 and March 10. We will be at the Gem City Saloon in Baraboo on Wednesday nights December 3, January 7, February 4 and March 4. We will be at Ooga Brewing Company in Beaver Dam on Thursday nights December 18, January 22, February 19 and March 19. All Bar Flies events will start at 6 p.m. We hope to see you there. If you have any questions, reach out to Dan Endres at dtendres9@gmail.com.
—Dan Endres

Antigo Chapter

Our chapter worked with several other chapters placing brush bundles at Long Springs, south of Hwy 64 off of Shepherd Road, followed by a great lunch provided by some of our members.

Recently, some of our members took turns cleaning the waste-line boxes that we have installed around Langlade County.

In July we held an informational meeting for our members and the public to talk about TU. We showed poster boards about some of our projects and work days. DNR Fisheries Technician Pete Curran discussed recent DNR projects, including spring pond dredging.

Lauren Genski provided a fly-tying demonstration. Everyone enjoyed her time and talent.

We are getting a bench to place on the end the fishing dock on the East branch of the Eau Claire River at Highways 45 and C.

Also, we've cleared some hurdles and in September will start construction of a fishing dock at Gartzke's Flowage. We've been working with the Langlade County forest manger to get approval. The dock will be 12 feet long and will replace an older pier that was recently removed. Contact me if you'd like to help out.
—Scott Henricks

Blackhawk Chapter

We started off spring with our annual banquet at Boundaries Bar & Grill in Beloit. Although it was not as well attended as in past years, it was still a success. Several young participants went home with some great raffle prizes. Everyone had a good time and we raised more than \$4,000.

The Wednesday fly-tying get together continued through the summer. The usual group of die-hard tyers were joined by some new people who were interested in learning this skill. This has been a great way to get members together and to bring in new members. And now we have boxes of flies to raffle at meetings or give away for other events. Several guys from the group attended the youth expo in Poynette to tie flies. Bob Haase always does a great job organizing every aspect of the event, making it very easy for volunteers. Everyone loves working with the kids.

Through the efforts of Joe Harper, we are partnering with Veterans On the Fly. At our banquet we had a special raffle, arranged by Joe, to raise money for veterans events.

We partnered for a fly-casting, fishing and picnic event in Janesville at the Kiwanis Pond. Certified casting instructor Kalyn Hoggard provided casting instruction. Joe Harper also planned other events this summer to bring veterans together.

The chapter is hoping to partner with the Green Rock Audubon Society (GRAS) to work on the East

Branch of Raccoon Creek. This is the only Class 1 trout water in Rock County. GRAS has a large segment of property through which the creek runs and its members have already completed extensive prairie restoration. Our chapter hopes to partner with them for efforts to improve the brook trout habitat. This is an ideal situation because GRAS provides public access to all their properties. Like many groups, they just need some additional volunteer help to complete their projects. Hopefully our members can be of some help.

Chapter Treasurer Anita Vaughn volunteered to be a mentor at this summer's Wisconsin TU Youth Camp. She said the experience was amazing, as usual, and that Linn Beck and all the other volunteers who organize the camp are incredible.

Several members attended a local Pheasants Forever Youth Outdoors Skills Day to show the kids fly-tying and fly casting. It's all and important part of getting our future generations connected to conservation and the outdoors.

Sadly, we lost one of our founding members, Don Studt. He was the chapter treasure for many years. Whether working in a stream, teaching fly tying, casting, serving as a chapter officer, or just telling stories, there wasn't anything Don wouldn't do to spread the TU word. He was a genuinely great person who loved being with and helping everyone.
—Dave Brethauer

Central Wisconsin Chapter

It has been a busy year. Bob Haase and 16 other volunteers spent two days tying flies with students at the Northwest Outdoor Heritage Educational Expo in

Poynette, which saw an attendance of more than 1,500 students. At our station the students picked out the components to make their fly and the volunteers tied the fly with goal



Caption: CWTU with the Elliott Donnelley Workday May 17, 2025 was held in conjunction with the TU Cares Central Sands Community Celebration. Members from CWTU, FVTU and Elliott Donnelley, were present as were members of TU national and friends of TU Cares.

to introduce students to the art of fishing.

Under the direction of Bob Jozowski, our River Keepers continue to monitor streams for water quality from May through October. New volunteers have completed their training to monitor water quality and record the results. Thirteen attendees with the addition of four new teams were present for the instruction by Bob Jozowski. CWTU now monitors 41 stream sites with 31 teams and 105 volunteers. CWTU purchased a dissolved oxygen "pen" instrument to compare the data with the present meter.

We held a successful Dan Harmon III Fly-Fishing School in June at the Amherst Bible Camp, with 24 students. It was coordinated by Jeff Treu, with the help of Joe Peikert, John Gremmer and numerous volunteers. Many thanks to chapter members who donated their weekend to share their expertise. It was noted by Jeff Treu that both Tracy Moran and Al Sanders caught trout while giving demonstrations to the students. Tracy Moran will be the new coordinator, as Jeff Treu is retiring. He will continue to help with the school, however. Applications are being accepted for the school to be held in June of 2026.

We hold work days on the third Saturday from May through September, with Mike Northam managing the program. Volunteers attended CPR and first-aid training through Fox Valley Technical College. A defibrillator is present at the workday events, as well as first-aid kits with GPS coordinates. Our first work day was in May on the Mekan River and included members from the Elliott Donnelley and Fox Valley chapters.

TU CARES held an environmental celebration in conjunction with the work day, and 80 individuals attended the event, which was sponsored by the Central Wisconsin, Fox Valley chapters and National TU. The event was a success with members from the U.S. Forest Service, Farm Bureau, Brookies to Butterflies, Pheasants Forever and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Community members and local land owners at-

tended as well.

Activities at the event included a watershed presentation by Chris Firkus, tree planting, insect identification, fly tying, stream restoration work and electro-shocking demonstration. Al Sanders entertained the attendees with his violin during lunch. Jamie Vaughn and Chris Collier from TU national were instrumental in planning the.

Our chapter will a sponsor the next TU CARES Environmental Celebration in May of 2026, in conjunction with CWTU's May workday.

Our June work day was also on the Mekan River. More than two dozen volunteers worked hard doing brushing, river restoration and tree planting. We were on the West Branch of the White River for our July and August work days. The August work day saw 76 people attend, including students and mentors from the Council's Youth Fishing Camp. DNR staff performed an electro-shocking demonstration to start the morning. Our September work day was at the DNR Habitat Restoration Station in Wild Rose.

The trout-redd identification seminar will be at the DNR's Wild Rose location on Saturday, October 25. Steve Devitt from the DNR is coordinating the event. We will provide breakfast and bag lunches for the event.

Our chapter has adopted Mekan River and the Pine River through the DNR Adopt-a-Stream program. The DNR's Shawn Sullivan is planning additional restoration work on the Mekan River.

Our Trout In the Classroom program is doing well. We are currently sponsoring the program at the Winnebago Lutheran Academy in Fond du Lac. Our Andy Papenfuss is managing the program, and the students will eventually release their brook trout into Parson's Creek. Wayne Parmley has been instrumental with the success of the program.

We held our June board meeting at Playground Park on the Mill Pond in Green Lake. We also held our August picnic and board meeting at the Tucker's on the Pine River. Nearly 40 people attended and



CENTRAL CHAPTER'S UPPER PINE HUMPHREY TEAM
The Central Wisconsin Chapter's WAV team, River Keepers, currently monitors 41 stream sites with 31 teams and 105 volunteers.

Chapter News



enjoyed catching up with old and new members.

We hold our educational programs following our board meeting from September through May.

Our annual TROUTFEST event is March 14, 2026 at the Mount Morris Camp and Retreat Center.

As of September 10, our board meetings will be held at 6:15 p.m. at the Winneconne Library. Educational programs begin at 7:15 p.m.

Upcoming programs:

October 8. Euro nymphing with Al Sanders.

November 12. Spey-fishing techniques and more with Jeff Treu.

December 10. Three “Down and Dirty Flies” with Steve Nelson.

January 14. The Fly-Fishing Adventures of Steve Heuser

February 11. Night of the Caddis; tying the nymph, emerger and adult fly with organized by Bob Haase, Tom Meyer and others.

We won’t hold a board meeting in March as we focus on our Trout Fest event on March 14.

—Laura Tucker

Coulee Region Chapter

It’s a wrap on another event season for the Coulee Region Chapter. This year we had the advantage of fair weather for all our events, especially if you don’t mind the heat.

Our summer event season started with TroutFest in Coon Valley. More than 100 participants joined us for the event. We were able to stock fish and have the participants actively fish the stream. Special thank you to chapter member Bob Retko, who generously supplied bait for the event. We distributed our

tee-shirts emblazoned with “I fished TroutFest with CRTU.” But temperatures soared in the afternoon, so we cut short some activities.

In a new feature this year, we invited our partners at the Coon Creek Community Watershed Council (CCCWC) to speak to the lunchtime crowd about conservation, the CCCWC, ties to Coon Valley and how they make running water walk. We had several new volunteers join us at TroutFest. Thank you to Angelica Gonzalez, Bill Stan-



TROUT FEST IS NEVER SHORT ON SMILES



KIDS LOVED THE “I FISHED TROUTFEST WITH CRTU!” T-SHIRTS



LADEN WITH CUSTOMIZED AND ARTFUL NAMETAGS

Coulee Region Chapter Youth Education Coordinator Brad Berger displays the nametags bestowed upon him by the STREAMgirls. The girls start the day by making personalized and customized nametags for themselves, being as creative as they’d like. Brad is always a favorite with the group.

ton and Marcy West. And thank you to Elliott Sjoquist, who returned to help out again for his second TroutFest.

In July we were at Pettibone Park for the Outdoor Youth Fest. Our exhibit was in a great location with lots of foot traffic. More than 100 families visited our exhibit to color trout pictures, tie flies, talk trout and cast fly rods for some good trout fun.

The casting clinic was a success. It was hosted by chapter member Steve Miller, one of our Fly Fishing International certified casting instructors. He generously volunteers with the chapter anytime it involves casting a fly rod.

For three evenings in July, he hosted a fly-casting clinic for the public. FFI certified casting instructors David Barron and Joseph Meyer also helped, along with our Chapter President Jason Freund.

August is highly anticipated in the Coulee Region Chapter, as it’s time for our premier event: STREAMGirls. Thank you to the West Fork Sports Club (WFSC) for the great facility, hospitality and the awesome mowed path to the stream. This year 10 girls had a wonderful day building confidence and exploring science and the outdoors, creating some art, making some memories and having lots of fun.

A favorite activity is making name tags for the day, where they’re encouraged to be creative. Our leaders are often bestowed name tags, as well, especially Brad Berger, who is always a favorite with the group.

Along with fly casting, fly tying and creating a memory bracelet, the girls spent time in the stream learning about entomology, stream flow calculations as well as environmental awareness.

We also had the most successful session of fly tying in recent memory. Instead of wooly buggers, we tied ant patterns, which were more recognizable. We ended up with an “ant army” with dubbing in every color of the rainbow. Who says that trout wouldn’t eat a pink ant? The program ends with the earning of a

badge and a certificate of completion, and a dedicated team of exhausted CRTU volunteers.

Our event season started in September, and with some activities a little further out into our large chapter area. In September Driftless Angler Head Guide Nick Voss talked about fall fishing.

On October 15 we head toward Richland and Crawford counties, where DNR Coldwater Fisheries Research Scientist Matt Mitro will discuss research on trout/beaver impacts on Elk Creek.

The Freshwater Ecology Club will present their Fish Science Talk in La Crosse on November 19.

We take a break for our holiday party and then on January 21 we visit the Vernon and Monroe county area for a conversation with Vernon County Conservationist David Hattenbach, and Monroe County LCD Director Robert Micheel.

You can find a complete list of upcoming events and activities at couleeregiontu.org and facebook.com/couleetu. Join us if you can.

Thanks to a great chapter fundraising campaign, we proudly donated \$14,525 to support DNR efforts to acquire a parcel of property at the confluence of the Seas Branch and West Fork of the Kickapoo River.

This has helped to push the public support total to \$101,000. We understand that appraisals are finished, and we are awaiting and hoping for good news. A grateful thank you to all the members and supporters who helped topple our fundraising goal.

Lastly, and sadly, we are all mourning the passing of Carol Murphy, president of the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter. Carol was a regular active volunteer for our chapter, too, and we will sorely miss her enthusiasm, charm, character and overall positive impact on those around her.

—Deb Muresan



Chapter News



Jim Jenkin

FOX VALLEY CHAPTER MEMBERS IN THE UPPER PENINSULA
Seth Water's Dark Waters Fly Shop provided plenty of direction and advice for the chapter's Autumn Angling Adventure.

Fox Valley Chapter

Cooler water temperatures, colorful scenery and the friendships only a fishing trip can make happen. Sounds like an Autumn Angling Adventure to me.

This year we went to Michigan's Upper Peninsula for our annual Autumn Angling Adventure. The weekend started with a chapter meeting at Dark Waters Fly Shop in Iron River.

Seth Waters and his crew set the weekend aside for this special event. At the shop, Dark Waters gave us special access to insights and guidance that would otherwise require extensive research and a lot of wader patching.

Pentoga Park near Crystal Falls was base camp for the adventure, with a Saturday featuring our Traveling Trophy Challenge for the most fish caught. It's a lighthearted, on-your-honor competition. On Saturday evening, we met at Pentoga Park for an evening campfire and the presentation of the trophy. It was the perfect way to unwind after a day on the water.

We were thrilled when members of the Fred Waara Chapter, from the U.P., joined us in this adventure. The event was a great opportunity to build connections and share our passion for coldwater conservation.

Expect some great changes at our Cabin Fever Day Fishing Expo 2026, held at the Fox Cities Exhibition Center. The expo is Jan. 24 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. We have 10,000 square feet to fill with exhibitors, including guides, reps from fly shops, non-profits, fly tyers, crawling aquatic insects, and the return of fly casting.

This year, we're expanding beyond trout fishing to include people and businesses that focus on fish that don't necessarily inhabit

streams.

Of course, there will be interesting speakers, our usual high-end bucket raffles, exciting silent auction items and a good selection of used equipment and books. This year's silent auction will include an opportunity to build your own bamboo rod, with Scott's Grady's guidance. This offering is something unique. Using his superb equipment, and being guided through the process by a master bamboo rod builder, offers a challenging and rewarding opportunity. Don't miss your chance at this.

Tickets will soon be available for the event at tu.myeventscen.com. Save some money and purchase them in advance.

We gathered 15 dedicated members to provide an experience in educational fishing adventure at the Outagamie County Fair. This year was our first attempt to provide "entertainment" at the county fair. Rain threatened all day but mercifully, we stayed dry during our event.

We provided a chance to try spin casting and fly casting and tie a fly. But most popular was hands-on aquatic-invertebrate demonstration, with critters from a nearby stream. People who never even considered fly fishing tried it for their first time. Families were amazed at the life from a stream and found out about our mission to conserve and improve the cold water streams in Wisconsin.

Our volunteers noticed that nearly everyone who walked by stopped in to participate. Hopefully, these people will remember us come Cabin Fever Day and remember what a great time we all had at the fair.

As a chapter, we've always focused on watersheds. We spend



Mark Hoffman

BEN HLABAN SHARES HIS KNOT-TYING KNOWLEDGE AT THE YOUTH CAMP
The Fox Valley Chapter's members are always ready to help out at the camp.



Mark Hoffman

COMBINING ALL THEY LEARNED INTO ACTION
They learn about knots. They learn about tying flies. They learn about macroinvertebrates. And the best part of camp is always the fishing.

most of our time fishing the Central Sand Hills region of Wisconsin. As a member of the TU CARES organization, we again focus on watersheds. We helped TU determine some of them as Priority Waters. The first watershed project TU CARES undertook is the Mekan River Watershed Management Plan. The project earned approval and funding at the end of 2024. Along with the Central Wisconsin Chapter, we provided matching funds to the DNR Grant awarded to our chapter for this project.

Subsequently, Merjent LLC was hired and their employee, Chris Firkus, who is also a chapter member, is leading and will complete the plan by the end of 2025. We feel this decision aligns with our expectations as a chapter. In fact the watershed plan benefits many chapters because it's centrally located in the state.

We anticipate the results will be tangible and long-lasting for future generations. We encourage all TU members to look forward to results of the Mekan River Watershed Plan this fall and participate in their implementation in the years to come.

Combine a group of adult mentors with over a thousand years' experience trout fishing, and nearly as many championing the conservation of our coldwater resources. Blend this experience with 20 young people anxious to learn skills and knowledge about fishing for trout and you have a learning experience that you need to see to believe.

The 2025 Wisconsin Youth Camp

many young people together with one-on-one attention from adults, providing well-spent time teaching about TU and fishing skills. Ben Hlaban, Dennis Johnsen and Tony Pudlo served as adult mentors.

Former youth campers Ashton Wagner and Grant Gabby served as junior mentors and stayed in the cabins with this year's campers.

Grant also presented a program on his experience at a trip out west to a National TU Summit youth program. Our chapter was responsible for arranging three of our young applicants to attend this awesome event.

Applications and information about the camp are available by January for next year's camp. The camp is free for either boys or girls, ages 12 to 16, because the chapters and council help cover the expenses to run the camp. If you know of anyone who might be interested in attending as a student or volunteering as a mentor, let us know.

We resumed our September-April monthly meetings. Visit foxvalleytu.org/ for times and places of upcoming meetings, presentations, activities and events.

Lastly, TU members from all chapters are welcome to join us from January through March for our famous Stone Fly Socials to enjoy the friendship of fellow anglers as we tie flies and share fabulous fishing stories, and maybe an adult beverage. Watch our website for details.

—Tony Pudlo



John Barkmeier

CASTING FOR FELT TROUT AT THE FAIR
The Fox Valley Chapter's station at the Outagamie County Fair was a great success. They offered spin casting and fly casting and fly tying. But most popular was the hands-on aquatic-invertebrate demonstration, with critters from a nearby stream.

Chapter News



Adrian Meseberg

CHAPTERS JOIN FORCES ON DOTY CREEK

Here's the work crew for the Green Bay Chapter's Doty Creek Habitat Improvement Day with the DNR, Oconto River Chapter and Wisconsin River Valley TU Chapter.

Green Bay Chapter

Since our last report, the Green Bay Chapter held our final three summer habitat improvement days. In June we partnered with the DNR, along with volunteers from the Oconto River and Wisconsin River Valley TU chapters for brush bundling on Doty Creek. Once the work was completed, our own Paul Kruse grilled his epic smashburgers for lunch.

In July we helped improve trout migration and spawning activity in Long Creek. About 30 volunteers from the Green Bay, Antigo, Marinette, Oconto River, Wisconsin River Valley and Wolf River chapters joined the DNR's Antigo Fisheries Crew to brush bundle the stream. The Wolf River Chapter then provided lunch.

In August we joined our friends with the Marinette and Oconto River chapters and the DNR for Beaver Creek trout trail maintenance.

We want to say "thank you" to all the volunteers and DNR staff for making these wonderful days.

In July we joined the Brown County Izaak Walton League, Brown County Volunteer Services, the Green Bay PALS Program & Exchange Club in hosting about 30 youth at the annual Kids Fishing Day. We have partnered on this event for more than 30 years. Words can't describe how grateful we are to these organizations and all the volunteers who come out to make this an amazing day.

In July the Brown County Izaak Walton League hosted the National Izaak Walton League's 100th Annual Anniversary. We were invited to be part of the national convention weekend's outdoor youth educational experiences. Youth from across the Midwest participated in several outdoor experiences, from learning the role of conservation wardens from a real warden, how to call a turkey with their new free box call, archery and much more.

We taught fly tying and casting. Each youth who participated took home their newly tied fly, a new fly box, a couple of bonus flies and an

introduction to a potential new passion. Thank you to all the "youngsters" who attended. This was one of the most polite, well-mannered and engaged groups we have taught. You should all be very proud of yourselves. Thank you to the Brown County Izaak Walton League, our chapter volunteers Pam Van Erem, Rick Jacob, Dave Ostanek, Adrian Meseberg and a gentleman whose name escapes me. Thank you to Scott Grady for the fly boxes and all the volunteers who helped make this a fantastic day.

We kicked off our 2025-26 meeting season with our September Board of Directors Draft Budget Meeting, where created a draft budget that we are very proud of. The next step is to present it for membership approval at our October 2 meeting. Thank you to our new chapter Treasurer Rick Jacobs for helping prepare the document. Also, thank you to our board members who worked through each line item.

Under the leadership of Banquet Chair Carla Zimmerman, our banquet committee has already held several. The Feb. 19 Conservation Banquet will be our 50th annual celebration. We are committed to putting together an amazing event for our supporters. More to come.

Working with TU National, Chapter President Adrian Meseberg has built a new website greenbay.tu.org. TU Online Community Manager Doug Agee said our website Green Bay is a model for other chapters to find ideas. The process took several months. The new website contains a ton of content for individuals who may be interested in our chapter, or in TU in general, easy ways to donate, area trout/salmon fishing information, bios of our chapter leaders and much more. We encourage everyone to check it out.

We continue to hold our VSP program at the First Presbyterian Church in De Pere. Veterans and volunteers meet to learn fly-tying and socialize every other Monday starting at 4:30 p.m. If you are a vet-



Adrian Meseberg

HOLDIN' FISH, SPORTIN' NEW SHADES AND SMILIN' BIG

A couple of happy youth anglers at the Green Bay Chapter, Brown County Izaak Walton League, Green Bay PALS, and Exchange Club's Kids' Fishing Day.



Adrian Meseberg

GREEN BAY CHAPTER AND IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE TEAM UP AGAIN

The Green Bay Chapter and the Izaak Walton League partnered to teach kids fly tying and casting at the Izaak's 100th Annual Convention.

eran who would like to participate, or if you would like to volunteer, please contact our Veterans 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 greenbay.tu.org or check our social media on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

—Adrian Meseberg

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter

In June, Chapter Habitat coordinator Randy Arnold was joined by Sarah Sanford, Loren Haas, Chip Robinson, Dave Gregg and Jeff Dahl in assisting the DNR's Nate Anderson and his crew with seeding and mulching the newest 4,700-foot restoration project on Plum Creek at the Von Holtum easement in Pierce County. In late July and early

August Ben Toppel, Rainbow Barry, Mary Lilly, John Walter, Kevin Palattao James Patterson, Stephen Field and Dave Drewiske assisted the DNR's Kasey Yallaly and her crew with the shocking surveys on both the Rush and Kinnickinnic Rivers. This is always a popular event for our members.

Members of our chapter's habi-



Adrian Meseberg

SIX CHAPTERS AND DNR JOIN FORCES ON LONG CREEK

The Green Bay, Antigo, Marinette, Oconto River, Wisconsin River Valley and Wolf River chapters, along with the DNR's Antigo Fisheries Crew, spent a July day doing habitat work on Long Creek.



Jeff Himes

PROUD NEW FLY ROD OWNER

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter Board Member Randy Arnold with Miriam Medley, the winner of a fly-fishing combo at the Pheasants Forever's youth field day, which included fly tying, casting and fishing.



Ben Toppel

BEAUTIFUL BROWN TROUT

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter Board Member Rainbow Barry with a nice Kinnickinnic River brown.



Chapter News



Randy Arnold

KIAP CHAPTER'S PLUM CREEK WORK CREW

This work day crew included Chip Robinson, Josh Kucko, Jeff Dahl, Nick Kriewald, Loren Haas, Dave Gregg and Nate Anderson.

tat maintenance crew met with Kas-ey Yallaly and Nate Anderson and representatives of Pierce, St. Croix and Polk county soil and water conservation departments to discuss prior and ongoing restoration projects in each of their respective areas. Our project on the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic River was discussed. All the Elevated Riparian Optimization (ERO) structures have been installed and there will be another fall spraying of woody vegetation of the project area.

June featured the third annual Sulphur Solstice Event at the Ellsworth Rod & Gun Club facility in Ellsworth, on the banks of the Rush River. This event was an opportunity to catch up with friends, make some new ones and have some great food and drink. The evening wrapped up around a bonfire back on the club grounds.

August featured our third annual Phil's Full Moon Fever at member Phil Kashian's Milkhouse Cottage and Gardens on the Rush River. The chapter and Phil supplied hot-dogs, chips, potato salad, watermel-

on and sweet corn. This was an evening of good food and company, with opportunities for newbies to cast some fly rods, fish and receive mentoring from more seasoned anglers.

In early September we kicked off our fall meetings with a Chapter Gathering and Gear Swap at "The Garage Bike + Brews" in River Falls. This was a social event and an opportunity to bring used fishing and outdoor equipment to swap and sell.

Also in September members Scott Holway, Tim Peterson, Jeff Homes, John Lowry, Linda Rademack, Brad Wistrom and Randy Arnold worked with the local chapter of Pheasants Forever to teach fly tying, casting and fishing to a group of 60 local youths aged 12-16 at the youth field day held at the Game Unlimited Hunt Club in Hudson. A drawing was held at the end of the event, and a fly-fishing combo was presented to winning participant Miriam Medley.

—Gary Horvath

Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter

Due to the passing of our president, Carol Murphy, we are shuffling some positions and duties. We are encouraging women in our chapter to come forward. We will be working out what to do for tributes for her contributions to our chapter and our lives. Thank you to all the other chapters and members who have paid tribute to her.

We had a camper for the summer WITU fishing camp.

Fennimore will resume Trout In the Classroom in October.

The DNR's Justin Haglund has set up a date of September 27 to clear brush along Big Spring. We are working on a date for clearing brush on the Blue River off County Road I, north of Montfort.

The current project at the Snow-bottom Wildlife Area is about half

completed but the rain has delayed the work. The riparian buffer zone plantings have been greening up.

Carol Murphy will be honored at the 2025 Landowner's Picnic for her many years of service to the Nohr Chapter of Trout Unlimited. We have invited her family to the event. The Bowers Road crossing of the Blue River was one of Carol's favorite spots to fish and enjoy the streams of the Driftless Area. She was particularly enamored by all the trout the DNR stream shocking team could find when fishing the same holes proved no takers when she offered her favorite flies. We will miss having another serving of her favorite brownies and miss her chuckles but honor her many contributions to our gatherings.

—Brian Larson



LAKESHORE CHAPTER WORK CREW

This day's crew included John Kueger, Wendy Lutzke, Dave Kempka, Al Wortz and DNR Biologist Drew Wallace.



HAPPY CAMPER. FIRST FISH ON A FLY ROD.

In August the Lakeshore Chapter worked with boys and girls at Camp YKoda, with the Sheboygan River as their classroom. For many of the kids the entire camp was a new experience.

Lakeshore Chapter

Greetings from the west coast of Lake Michigan.

As usual, we've had a fun and productive summer. We held Onion River habitat workdays on the second Saturday morning of each month.

The work we did in the last three months, in partnership with our local DNR staff, has nearly completed the three-year project to rebuild and repair existing Onion River LUNKER structures and backfill bank erosion behind those structures.

They are rebuilt, backfilled with rock and soil, and now seeded with native plants. In other areas of the stream, more than 300 Christmas trees were installed this summer to complete bank covers that narrow the stream and reduce erosion. By late August the seeded areas were growing up nicely, the bank covers look great after they withstood some heavy rains and the river is fishing beautifully.

During the summer we had crews clear downed trees from the river that were restricting flow in numerous locations within the public fishing areas.

We've also continued our work to keep access trails open throughout the public fishing area. The anglers that I have spoken with while fishing the Onion are absolutely brimming with praise for the work we've done on this stream.

A huge thank you to all of the volunteers who came out for our workdays. And also thank you to our sponsors, our board members who lead the workdays, our cooking crew and to our partners in the DNR for their hard work and support.

Our Water Action Volunteer teams continue to do monthly water-quality monitoring at Mill Creek, Ben Nutt, the Onion River, the Sheboygan River and the Pigeon River. Teams monitor temperature, oxygen levels, clarity, flow, macroinvertebrates and phosphorus. Testing is done once a month from May through October. The collected data is submitted into the Wisconsin information management system for use by DNR, county planners and scientists. Many thanks to the

10 volunteers who work every month to provide this important data.

The Lakeshore Chapter conducted two STREAM camps this summer.

In July we had a one-day camp in partnership with the Girl Scouts at Camp Evelyn. Our volunteers, led by Wendy Lutzke, spent the day conducting the TU STREAM curriculum for 15 girls. The girls did a stream walk and macroinvertebrate study on Mullet Creek, tied flies and learned some basic fly casting techniques.

In August we spent two hours a day for four days with 15 boys and girls at Camp YKoda. We used the Sheboygan River as our classroom.

For many of the kids the entire camp was a new experience. There was wading in the stream, closely observing the environment, finding and identifying the creatures that live in the water, and tying a fly and casting a fly rod. The Camp YKoda kids were lucky enough to go fishing in the camp pond on the final day and had a great time. Kids love being in the water, learning about nature, collecting bugs and learning to fish. The laughs and smiles on their faces tell the whole story. It's pretty special.

I encourage all TU members to get involved with your chapters. TU is all about making our world a better place one small local project at a time. The need is there, the resources are there, the programs are there. The biggest need is you.

We are growing and have a huge impact through our local conservation efforts, veterans and youth education programs. There is so much great work to be done for the future of our environment and our sport.

The biggest enabler of our work is the number of volunteers that step forward. We know that your time is your most precious commodity and that you have many choices about what you do, with whom you do it and for what purpose. If you want to make a difference and environmental stewardship is important to you, come check us out. I think that you will like what you see.

—Al Wortz

Chapter News



Marinette Chapter

The Marinette Chapter teamed up with the Green Bay Chapter to help with some summer stream and habitat projects. We will be starting our monthly meetings in late Sep-

tember or October. We are in the process of finding a new location for our annual fundraising banquet, as our previous venue has closed.

—Dale Lange

Oconto River Chapter

Our members participated in four summer stream restoration projects: planting trees on Spring Creek in May, continuing brush bundling on Doty Creek in June, installing Christmas tree bundles on Long Creek in July to improve flow, and completing brush bundling and trail maintenance on North Beaver Creek in August.

Our picnic, fishing event and meeting drew more than 40 attendees with four new members joining. At the meeting, it was announced that the Northwoods TU Chapter would be disbanding and that Forest County may be incorporated into

our chapter. This was approved by the membership.

The Chapter will provide youth rod casting and fly-casting lessons at the August Youth sporting event hosted by the Suring Sportsman's Club. A fishing tank will be available for hands-on practice.

The installation of a handicap-accessible fishing pier on the Oconto River at Underhill Park was organized by the Oconto County Sportsmen's Alliance. Our chapter provided financial support for the project, which was completed in June.

—Tom Klatt



OCONTO RIVER CHAPTER HELPED FINANCE THIS NEW FISHING PIER
The installation of a handicap-accessible fishing pier on the Oconto River at Underhill Park was organized by the Oconto County Sportsmen's Alliance.

Southern Wisconsin Chapter

In late July we were happy to see many turn out to watch our friends in the DNR survey Black Earth Creek, after which we gathered for an informal picnic. Young and old, we all had fun getting out on a lovely summer day. It's worth noting here that Mitch Trow of the DNR was ecstatic with the results of their Black Earth Creek surveys this summer. These extensive watershed surveys are only done every six years, and this one seemed to loudly say

that "Black Earth Creek is back!"

Our chapter is concerned about a massive development planned for a critical recharge area in the Black Earth Creek watershed. You can find information online about the proposed project, including our chapter's letter to the Village of Cross Plains calling for protection of Black Earth Creek and the Festge Spring.

Even with summer coming to a close, things are still heating up for



FRONT ROW SEATS FOR A BLACK EARTH CREEK SHOCKING DEMO
Southern Wisconsin Chapter members enjoy a DNR survey of Black Earth Creek, and word was that the numbers looked pretty good.

SWTU's chapter gatherings and stream workdays, starting with our September membership meeting and annual Meicher Madness Auction event. Generous donors and buyers led to a tremendous redistribution of gear and nearly \$5,000 raised to put toward our coldwater resources.

The next Saturday saw our first stream workday of the fall, which saw excellent work done to help set the stage for the DNR to greatly improve access to Garfoot Creek. A September 27 joint workday with the Nohr Chapter on Big Spring Branch was held in honor of the late Carol Murphy. Her leadership and infectious energy will be terribly missed by all of Wisconsin TU. Several more workdays are planned and promoted on our website,

Our monthly chapter meetings are held the second Tuesday at Schwoegler's on Madison's west side. The October speaker is Kyle Zempel of Black Earth Creek Angling on trout fishing in Patagonia and the services he now offers there. November will feature the intern we sponsored on the DNR fish survey crews this summer, Tim Parks, one of the biologists who supervised her, and Josh, the Sun Prairie teacher who'll report on their second successful year of Trout In a Classroom. December is not yet set, but expect fishy social fun and great camaraderie.

As always, we have much and more going on. Visit swtu.org to learn more.

—Drew Kasel

Southeast Wisconsin Chapter

SEWTU's summer kicked off with a habitat workday at Scuppernong Springs in the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest. This small and environmentally sensitive brook trout stream has been worked on for more than 15 years by the chapter.

On June 7, a crew of chapter volunteers installed 30 biologs to stabilize the banks in a previously untouched section above the Hotel Springs. A second crew cut, treated and removed invasive buckthorns which were used as a bio-backfill for further stabilization. By the end of the morning, we could already see silt accumulating behind the biology structures, as was intended.

Habitat Co-chair Ken Rizzo said 18 volunteers provided more than 100 volunteer hours to improve more trout water on this small crystal-clear Kettle Moraine gem.

Our annual casting clinic took place in late July in Greenfield Park in West Allis. More than 30 participants learned the basics of casting, or had their skills enhanced by our volunteer instructors. This included a good number of kids, seniors and women. It was great to see some of our dedicated long-time members pitch in and share their skills, and a special thanks goes out to all those

guys. We finished with a picnic of bratwurst, chips, sides and cold drinks. Oh, and fish stories.

Our fourth annual August Driftless Mentored and Social Fishing Weekend drew more than 20 participants to the West Fork Sports Club, including two members of our neighboring Southern Chapter.. It was great to see all these people come out. Friday night arrivals fanned out and fished on their own. On Saturday morning, mentors and mentees paired up and hit the streams. Before doing so, we announced the first annual Driftless CPR (catch, photo and release) Challenge for all conceivable categories of trout fishing activity ranging from the first trout ever caught, the biggest and smallest of our resident species, as well as a "who filled their waders," largest rough fish and more. Fishing was tough, but nearly everybody hooked at least a couple of trout.

Many of the mentors and mentees assembled at the legendary Rockton Bar for lunch. It was at that point that the stories began to flow. After lunch, the intrepid fishers headed out for more fishing.

On Saturday evening everyone was treated to a Driftless Charcuteries Board with a host of treats, two



SOUTHEAST FISHING WEEKEND INCLUDED CHARCUTERIE BOARD
On Saturday evening of the Southeast Wisconsin Chapter's Mentored Fishing Weekend, everyone was treated to a Driftless charcuteries board with a host of treats, two types of cowboy beans, grilled wild game and grilled chicken.



Chapter News



SOUTHEAST WISCONSIN CHAPTER HOLDS ANNUAL CASTING CLINIC
Jeff Ladewig instructs new caster at the chapter's July casting clinic in Greenfield Park in West Allis. More than 30 participants learned the basics of casting, or had their skills enhanced by our volunteer instructors. This included a good number of kids, seniors and women.

types of cowboy beans, grilled wild game and grilled chicken. This was followed by the first annual Driftless CPR Challenge awards around the campfire. Our "judges" analyzed cell phone photos of the catch and awarded very cheap prizes for the various categories. The evening concluded with a social campfire and more fish stories, followed by Joe Schroeder's Dutch oven peach cobbler. This dish, which Joe has refined over the past few years, has now evolved into a fine campfire

desert. Next year we will bring ice cream. I am pretty sure a good time was had by all.
We're looking forward to the F3T Fly Fishing Filmfest Thursday September 25 at 7 p.m. at the Bavarian Bierhaus in Glendale. In addition to these high-quality short films we'll offer a fishing kayak as a door prize, trout gear bucket raffles and more. We're hoping all of you will us.
—Rick Larkin

Wild Rivers Chapter

It has been a busy summer in the north woods. In June we planted 1,100 trees in the White River State Fishery Area along the South Fork of the White River in Bayfield County. Six Ashland high school students came and helped us with the tree planting.
So far this year we have donated \$3,600 to Adopt the White River State Fishery Area as well as many volunteer hours.
We are also continuing with the DNR our Angler Creel Survey at many access locations along the White River Watershed. We purchased and donated the creel survey kiosks and trail cameras to the DNR for this project.
Also in June many chapter members helped with the 25th Annual

Kids Fishing Day at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland.
Our chapter and the DNR had our first workday for the Clam River State Fishery Area in Burnett County in late June. We did some brushing and helped the DNR place root wads in the North Fork of the Clam River. We donated \$4,000 to the Adopt the Clam River state Fishery Area and we are planning several more workdays along the Clam River this fall.
In July we assisted with stream restoration work along the Marengo River in the Lincoln County Forest, which is owned by Landmark Conservancy.
We purchased and in June placed 18 Hobo temperature data



WILD RIVERS MEMBERS HELP OUT ON THE LITTLE BRULE RIVER
Wild Rivers Chapter members joined Brule River Sportsman Club members and the DNR for two days of brushing along the Little Brule River, a coldwater tributary to the Bois Brule River.



WILD RIVERS CHAPTER TREE-PLANTING CREW
Wild Rivers Chapter members helped plant 1,100 trees in the White River State Fishery Area along the South Fork of the White River in Bayfield County. Six Ashland high school students came and helped with the tree planting.

loggers on various coldwater trout streams across northwest Wisconsin.
Frank Pratt has started our Mosquito Brook climate resiliency multi-year project. Mosquito Brook is a main coldwater tributary to the Upper Namekagon River.
Wendy Williamson and Larry Mann have spent countless hours helping the four separate Women's Rivers of Recovery veteran fishing outings this past summer. Our chapter donated \$1,500 to support the veteran outings.
Two of our members helped the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service with trout sampling along four different coldwater feeder trout streams where the prior year's new culverts were installed. This study was to collect fish data on fish passage im-

provement.
Chapter members joined Brule River Sportsman Club members and the DNR for two days of brushing along the Little Brule River, a coldwater tributary to the Bois Brule River.
In August a group of chapter volunteers helped at the Brule Fish Hatchery Family Fun Day, including helping kids with fly tying, fly-casting instructions and understanding the aquatic insects in the Bois Brule River.
On October 8 we will once again hold our annual Brule River afternoon outing at the Copper Range Campground. There will be beer, pop, brats, hamburgers and great fishing stories. Come join us.
—John Simonson

Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter

The summer of 2025 in our area was all about growth, including robust plant growth due to warm temperatures and ample rainfall. When checking on the trees planted at four different sites over the past four years, we are seeing very good survivorship and significant growth.
Granted, finding the smaller trees such as Tamarack not planted in tubes has been nearly impossible in the dense, high, grass growth. The extra effort and cost to use the tree tubes has paid off with increased survivorship of the trees planted in them in these areas with tall dense grass.
To keep some of the areas fishable where we have cleared undesirable trees, our chapter has

supported DNR mowing efforts on Elk Creek and Gilbert Creek. One pleasant effect of these conditions has been an outstanding late-summer hopper season. I hope all the readers have been able to get out on their favorite grassy stream section and swing their never-fail hopper imitation.
To highlight and celebrate the extensive work that had been done on the North Branch of Wilson Creek John Sample of the Natural Resource Conservation Service arranged a meeting and walkthrough of the area with representatives of the full supporting cast. Prior to walking the creek, the initial project plan, the science that decisions where based on, problems encoun-



NEW GRASSY AREAS MAKE FOR IMPROVED HOPPER ACTION
Hard work from Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter members means that late-season hopper fishing in the grassy areas created by removing tag alder and box elder trees has been outstanding this year.

Chapter News



tered during the work and the overall results were described and discussed. Attendees included representatives of all the partners on the project including our chapter, Kiap, the DNR and TUDARE, as well as the landowner. The landowner is pleased with the outcome of the project, and the area clearly shows the public is accessing it for the improved fishing opportunities. Further work is being planned on a

different section of this stream.

Chapter board members Tom Sather, Bill Heth and Peter Jonas volunteered at the recent 2025 Reel Recovery Retreat in River Falls. These retreats provide individuals with cancer an opportunity to fly fish and participate in “healing conversations” within a supportive setting.

—Bob Mitchell

Wisconsin River Valley Chapter

Our Water Action Volunteers (WAV) continue to collect stream data. Jim Slaton and I have been visiting the Prairie River each month to take our readings and enjoy the ever-changing seasons. For our August reading, we were just getting set up and I had a miss-step and managed to fall in. Thankfully I heeded the advice of Dallas Moe from his wader safety talk at fishing camp and was wearing my belt. Socks were a bit soggy, but we were able to complete our mission.

I have been concerned about the lack of dragonflies in the last few years. We have seen a few more than last year, including a larger species that I watched laying eggs in the water in our sampling area. Part of a large willow has collapsed on the east bank and a dead pine with a cracked base seems to be leaning just a little more each time we visit. We had been seeing a frilled orchid in blossom for a few years but haven't seen it for the last two Julys. The cedar waxwings were very acrobatic flying after insects during our last visit.

Kirk Stark placed orders for Trout In the Classroom supplies and Al Hauber is working on getting some trout eggs for the small-but-active class of 7th and 8th graders at Montessori Charter School. Bruce Trueblood is the adolescent guide at the school.

July featured a brush-bundling workday on Long Creek using Christmas trees donated by Antigo and Merrill communities. TU members from Antigo, Green Bay, Marinette, Oconto River, Wolf River and Wisconsin River Valley chapters got together with The DNR's Taylor Curran and his fisheries crew to do brush bundling on this cute little stream east of Antigo. Thank you to all the people who came out to help. And a big thank you to Paul Kruse from the Green Bay Chapter for providing lunch for everyone.

In late July we celebrated the 2025 Hop Passport March Brewsanity National Championship. A quick shout out to Sawmill Brewing Company in Merrill and a great big thank you for the \$250 donation to our chapter.

August featured a brush-bundling workday on Spring Creek. Taylor Curran and the Antigo Fisheries crew and members from TU got together to work on this beautiful little stream. A lunch of smoked pulled pork sandwiches was provided. Thank you to everyone for their hard work and help on this project.

As always we supported the Council's Youth Fishing Camp. It's great to meet a new group of kids every year. Thank you to Terry and all the incredible mentors. This year our chapter sponsored young Ganen Fuchs. He is showing great promise to be a wonderful fly caster. I am hoping to go out and fish with him before the season ends. Thank

you to the wonderful mentors and junior mentors for their time and tips and stories and smiles and support. Thank you to all the presenters for their time and all of their tips that help and enhance the experience out on the water. Thank you, Linn, for all your amazing work in putting this together every year.

Also in August was the 20th Annual Sporting Heritage Youth Day at the Wausau School Forest, with 171 kids. Many thanks to Bob Paine, Jim Slayton and Al Hauber for all their help.

Here's what we have coming up. Social time is from 6 p.m. to 6:45 p.m., followed by chapter news and the featured presentation from 6:45 p.m. to 8 p.m.

On October 10 (tentative date) we will gather at the Legion Memorial Park in Hatley for the Annual Plover River Stream Study with the Wausau East IB Biology, Chemistry and Physics classes. We will be assisting Mr. Ekiss' students with identifying aquatic insects.

- October 14 at the Sawmill Brewery in Merrill will feature “Fish Tales.” Join us for a night of celebrating outdoor writers and writing. Experience the works and authors that shape and inform our passion for the outdoors. Special emphasis will be on our own upper midwestern writers.
- November 11 at Sconni's Alehouse & Eatery in Wausau will feature “Adventures of a fisheries technician - My summer protecting cutthroat trout,” with Sophia Peissig.
- December 9 at the Sawmill Brewery Merrill will feature “Our Trout Fishing and Outdoors Christmas List.” Craig Cook and the good folks from Fall Line Outfitters will be sharing the newest “must haves” for the coming year.
- January 13 at Sconni's Alehouse & Eatery in Wausau is “An Evening with the DNR.” Come and hear about current chapter projects and the state of our trout waters. It will be presented by Taylor Curran and other DNR coldwater staff.
- February (Exact date and location TBD) will feature our 2025 International Fly Fishing Film Tour.
- March 10 at the Sawmill Brewery in Merrill features “Culverts, Fish and Water Action Volunteers” with Tom Boisvert, conservation program manager for the Lincoln County Land Services Department.
- April 14 at Sconni's Alehouse & Eatery in Wausau will feature “Steelhead Fishing Great Lakes Tributaries” with Jake Pease.
- May 12 at the Sawmill Brewery in Merrill will feature “Fly Design for Both Tyers and Non-Tyers Alike,” with Bob Paine.

—Linda Lehman



WISCONSIN RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER MEMBERS AT SPRING CREEK

August featured a brush-bundling workday on Spring Creek. Taylor Curran and the Antigo Fisheries crew and members from TU got together to work on this beautiful little stream, and finished with smoked pulled-pork sandwiches.

Update on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative



WEST ALLEN CREEK TREE-PLANTING CREW

TU staff, partners, and volunteers at a GLRI fish-passage project.

By Jamie Vaughan, TU's Great Lakes Engagement Manager

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) accelerates efforts to protect and restore the largest system of fresh surface water in the world – the Great Lakes. GLRI is crucial for the longevity and health of the Great Lakes and we celebrate its notable improvements to ecosystems and local communities since its inception in 2010.

The GLRI has helped connect more than 6,000 river miles, while protecting, restoring or enhancing more than 460,000 acres of habitat. Also it's been central to efforts that keep self-sustaining populations of silver, bighead and black carp out of the Great Lakes.

In Wisconsin, the GLRI has funded dozens of recent aquatic organism passage projects, dam removals and instream habitat improvements.

These efforts are improving the lives of millions of people and benefiting communities, creating jobs, and cleaning up the source of drinking water for more than 42 million Americans. However, continued in-

vestment is necessary to keep up the momentum and help communities face accelerating threats.

Funding status

In August the U.S. House and Senate advanced several key appropriations bills which included \$368 million in GLRI funding, maintaining the level of funding the program has received in recent years.

We're happy to see sustained investment in this indispensable program and thank the members of the Great Lakes Task Force for being powerful advocates for the GLRI – including Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Rep. Glenn Grothman (R-WI), Rep. Bryan Steil (R-WI), Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI), and Rep. Tony Wied (R-WI).

Looking ahead, with the GLRI authorization expiring in 2026, we urge Congress to pass the GLRI Act of 2025 to put the program on solid footing for years to come.

Thanks to all the Wisconsin advocates who have spoken up for the GLRI in recent years. Your voices are being heard on Capitol Hill and making a difference here at home.

Got those TU plates on your car 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



The healing powers of streams

“Many men go fishing all their lives without knowing it is not fish they are after.”

That quote, typically attributed to Thoreau, is one Reel Recovery Wisconsin Facilitator David Barton used in the closing circle of the recent 2025 Reel Recovery Wisconsin retreat in River Falls. For two days, a group of men with cancer gathered together for five Courageous Conversations, six meals and hours surrounded by trout streams. They were joined by 18 volunteer “fishing buddies” who showed them the ropes, imparted some wisdom and had them feeling the tug of trout and smallmouth on a western Wisconsin stream.

What is Reel Recovery?

Reel Recovery is a national non-profit organization providing fly-fishing retreats for men with cancer of any type at any stage. These retreats combine the beauty and healing power of time on streams with the important Courageous Conversations led by a trained facilitator.

To date, Reel Recovery programs have hosted more than 4,800 men since its inception in 2003. In 2025, 37 retreats will be completed around the country and across the globe. And while all involved go fishing, everyone eventually comes to realize that it’s not the fish we are after.

Volunteers and support for Reel Recovery Wisconsin come from a broad range of sources. The Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 434 hold their annual charity golf outing to fund this retreat. Additional local sponsors include the Frieda and William Hunt Memorial Trust, the Hudson Hospital Foundation, Star Prairie Fish & Game, American Legion Post 111 – Somerset, and the Rhinos Foundation.

Financial and volunteer support also comes from the Wisconsin Clear Waters, Coulee, Kiap-TU-Wish, Lakeshore and Twin Cities chapters, and also the Wisconsin Council.

After spending a morning at the Eagle’s Roost Trout Pond learning

about casting, flies and presentation...and hauling in some rainbows and browns from Bill Leber’s pond, they were ready to hit some Driftless Area trout streams. They cast flies, caught fish and enjoyed local fly lore at Lund’s Fly Shop, from which Brian and his crew donated flies for the retreat. And yet...it wasn’t the fish we were after.

The volunteers have become a close-knit group, as have the participants. Volunteer fishing buddies have been doing this annually with Reel Recovery Wisconsin, taking time off work, paying their way to get to the retreat to donate their time and talent. Some volunteers have been participants in Reel Recovery, and are on their own cancer journey. All of us have been impacted in some way by cancer – directly or through friends and family. Volunteers come for years in a row, and it becomes a mini-reunion as the fly-fishing gear gets prepped, and the vests are laid out to be signed. And yet...it’s not the fish we’re after.

When the retreat concludes, and the participants circle up for final words, with the hand of their fishing buddy on their shoulder, the men hold the circle tight. Tears are shed. Hugs happen...among men who have become tightly knit on this cancer journey that none of them chose to be on. We know they were brought a little tighter by Reel Recovery.

As one participant wrote about the retreat: “It gave me the opportunity to both confront my cancer with Courageous Conversations, and forget about it while fishing.”

It’s not the fish we’re after. Be Well! Fish On!

Interested in learning more about Reel Recovery as a participant or as a volunteer? Check out reelrecovery.org or email Reel Recovery Wisconsin conference co-chairs Scott Wagner at john.scott.wagner@outlook.com, Bruce Maher at bmaher@baldwin-telecom.net or Tom Sather at twssather@gmail.com.



PARTICIPANTS AND VOLUNTEERS HAVE BECOME CLOSE KNIT



DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS ARE CRUCIAL FOR THE PROGRAM

Volunteer fishing buddies have been doing this annually with Reel Recovery Wisconsin, taking time off work, paying their way to get to the retreat to donate their time and talent.



WARMING UP WITH A FEW POND TROUT

They spent the morning at the Eagle’s Roost Trout Pond learning about casting, flies, presentation and catching. Some rainbows and browns from Bill Leber’s pond were willing to cooperate. After that, everyone headed out to fish on some Driftless Area trout streams.

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Iowa groups visit Wisconsin to discuss watersheds



FAILED JERSEY VALLEY DAM A MUST-SEE ON THE TOUR

By Cameron Aker, Iowa Driftless Engagement Coordinator

In early September a group of Iowans made the trek to Wisconsin to learn what practices county, state and community watershed groups are implementing on the landscape. This group consisted of staff from the City of Cedar Rapids, Dubuque County Soil & Water Conservation District, Iowa Flood Center, Maquoketa River WMA, Northeast Iowa Resource, Conservation & Development, TU, Turkey River Watershed Management Authority and University of Iowa.

The group first met in the town of Sparta to discuss Monroe County’s PROTECT Grant, and how this grant is being used to build flood resiliency on the landscape. After that was a visit to a Coon Creek Community Watershed Council event, where a local grower showcased a newly completed sediment basin.

The next day, the group toured one of the first Coon Creek Watershed Demonstration Project structures build by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1934. This

structure, which includes step downs to slow water and a retention basin, is still functional to this day. The tour would not be complete without the obligatory picture with the Historical Marker near Chaseburg commemorating the demonstration project.

Next, the group visited the Jersey Valley PL-566 Dam, which failed in 2018 and was subsequently drawn down. This draw down will help the DNR and Vernon County complete a project to keep the West Fork Kickapoo River cooler downstream of the dam. The group then made its way to the Mlsna PL-566 Dam which has recently been decommissioned. This dam has been notched to allow the stream to flow uninterrupted through the valley.

The group finished the tour by visiting two organic dairy growers in the watershed which are associated with the Organic Valley Dairy Co-operative. They highlighted the projects and practices they are implementing on their land. One has recently completed a composting barn, which means that no lagoons or pits are necessary to operate. The



FIRST CCC DAM FROM 1934 IS STILL FUNCTIONING
The group also visited the first CCC Dam built for the Coon Creek Watershed Experimental Project in 1934.



SILVO PASTURE PROJECT IN THE COON CREEK WATERSHED
Photo provided by the Maquoketa River WMA and IHR-Hydrosience and Engineering staff.

waste is composted to a state that is less likely to have negative effects on water quality. The other grower has planted hundreds of trees on his property to help slow water and create diversity on the landscape.

This tour was the second collaborative meeting between Iowa and Wisconsin. This summer, a group from Wisconsin toured projects happening in Iowa. This collaboration is helping to share knowledge between the groups. The Wisconsin groups involved are the Coon Creek Community Watershed Council, the Monroe County and Vernon County land conservation departments, the River Alliance of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Wetlands Association.

BOOK REVIEWS FROM DUKE WELTER

Woolly Buggers Don’t Count: Trout Fishing Adventures in the Driftless Area, by Bob Luck

This book of little essays entertainingly covers a wide range of fishing and related topics, set right here in the Driftless Area. Bob Luck is the former president of the Twin Cities Chapter and now he just has unlimited time to fish, especially his home waters: the Kinnickinnic and Rush rivers.

The book’s topics range from the aesthetics of these spots to the food found near fishing rivers, fishing techniques including his learning curve on nymphing, and his arcane attraction to Tenkara. He explores a fair bit of water, but doesn’t name it other than the signature streams. With self-deprecating humor, it’s obvious that he doesn’t take it all too seriously, either.

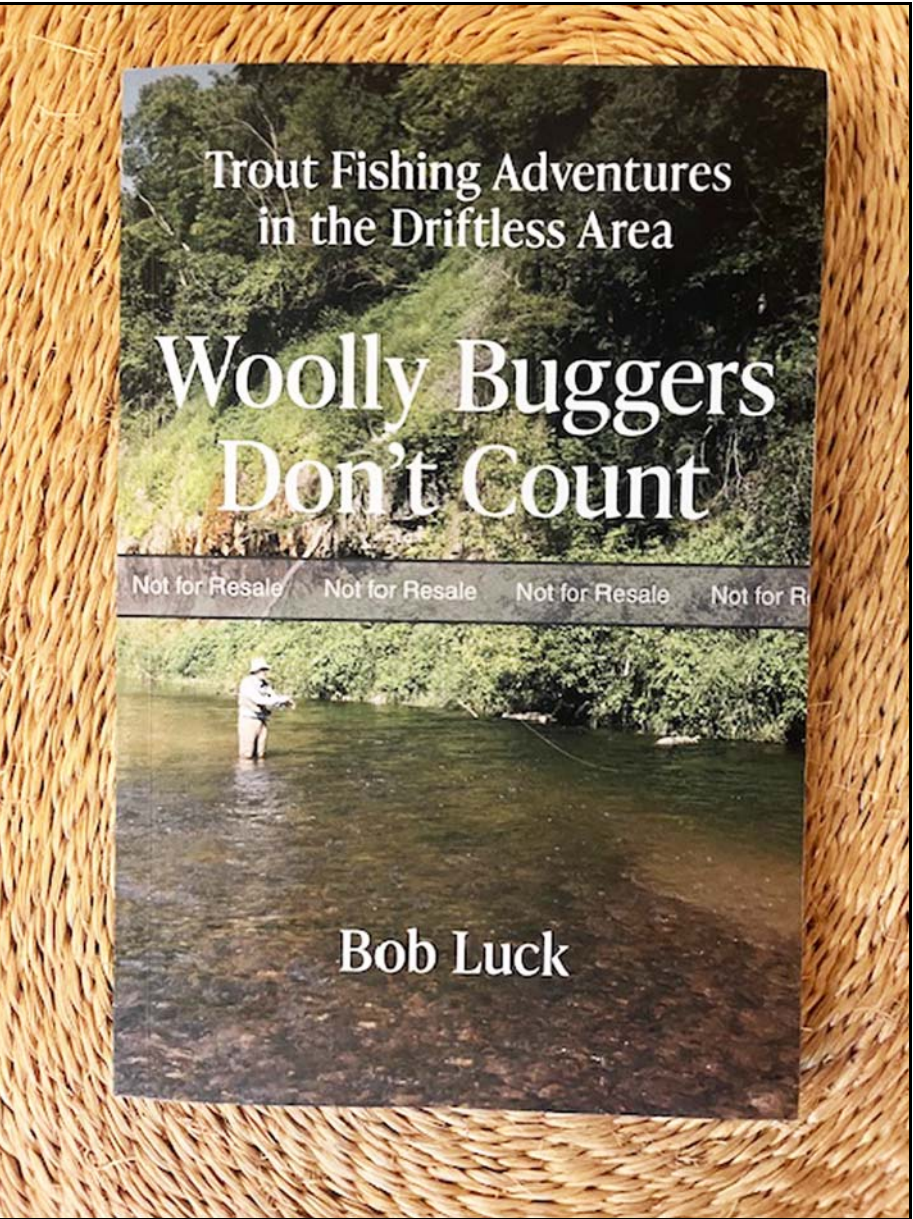
Bob spent much of his business career working in Japan, returning to the Twin Cities six years ago when he retired. He and his wife Sahja now spend the winter months in northern Japan where they ski and appreciate the Hokkaido mountains. When they return, he comes back to the trout season and hits it pretty hard.

Some of his essays dive deep into a topic, such as one on tricos, which he calls “Mystery Mayflies” for good reason. There’s lots of conventional wisdom about what some call “the little white curse,” but Bob shows us that these bugs vary a great deal in their emergence, and trout behavior toward them varies from day to day.

I’ll let you explore the rest of the essays in his book. They are typically short, often quite funny and always interesting.

We’ve needed a good essayist and humorist to write about this neck of the woods. This fun little book suggests we may have found one.

“Woolly Buggers Don’t Count: Trout Fishing Adventures in the Driftless Area.” Bob Luck, Pocket Water Press, www.pocketwaterpress.com, 172 pages, \$20.



Three time-tested terrestrial tippet tips

By Peter Jonas, TUDARE Partnership Specialist. Photos by Carf Creative, Justin Carfagnini

Yes, 4x tippet has its place, but that does not include the hook eye of a #12 hopper. Terrestrial season is the time of year in the Driftless Area when you have the best chance of hooking a large trout on a large dry fly in broad daylight. Here are three tips to improve those odds.

Tip one: Go heavy

NFL teams go with their heavy package in short-yardage situations. You need to go heavy with your tippet selection. My friends make fun of me for the rope I tie on to the end of my line, but I stand my ground in the face of all ridicule. Many (but not all) hopper takes are purely reactive. The fly splats on the water and the fish immediately reacts and smashes it with abandon. Do you think that fish is in any way leader shy?

On a typical day I start with 3x tippet to the fly. If the fish tell me they are in reactive mode, when that tippet begins to wear, I switch to 2x.

When you hook a good-sized brown trout, it will undoubtedly head for the closest LUNKER structure or rooted bank it can find. You are now in a short-yardage situation that calls for beefy tippet. Sometimes it really does come down to who is going to win a plain ol' tug of war. With 2x tippet, I like my chances.

An additional advantage of heavy tippet is that you will get your hopper snagged in tall, late-summer



OBVIOUS CLUE?

If you're seeing hoppers hopping about, that'll certainly boost your odds...and your attitude. And if you can catch one and take a good look at it, it'll help you narrow down your choice of hopper pattern.

are fussy about drift. Don't retie your leader, just tie on a super-long piece of tippet at the end.

Another situation that calls for a long leader is when trout are hanging out in fast water at the head of a pool. Even during the feeding frenzy of hopper season, fish will only put up with so much malarkey.

When your short leader catches in the fast current and starts pulling the fly so it zipps through the current seam at freeway speed, you are testing the fish's credulity.

I can put more slack in my presentation and buy a critical few feet and few seconds with a longer tippet. This often makes all the difference when trying to hook a fish in a quiet seam or pocket adjacent to fast water.

Tip three: Go cheap

Orvis Super Strong 2x tippet has a diameter of .009 inches and a breaking strength of 11.5 pounds.

Trilene XL 8-pound-test line has a diameter of .010 inches, while 10-pound-test line has a diameter of .011 inches.

Have I used Trilene? You bet. Do the fish care? Most days, I doubt it. There is a tradeoff. Tippet material has a greater strength in relation to diameter while mass-market mono has more diameter but greater abrasion resistance.

I also think Trilene has significantly greater breaking strength than its pound test rating.

You can dramatically raise the level of your cheapskateness and your reputation for eccentricity by going to the counter of your local tackle shop that sells bulk line with some old tippet spools and asking them to fill them with various pound tests of mono. Yes, I'm that guy. Bulk mono is amazingly cheap. Just don't tell them that I sent you and remember to mark your spools.

Don't forget the thermometer

Here's one more tip that starts with a T. Use your stream thermometer. Many of our streams can climb into the danger zone for trout during a hot, late-summer day. If water temperatures exceed 65 degrees, find cooler water upstream, or call it a day.



TRY ADDING MORE TIPPET FOR A LONGER LEADER

Sometimes a decent drift is important, and when it is, one strategy is not to decrease tippet size, but to increase tippet length.

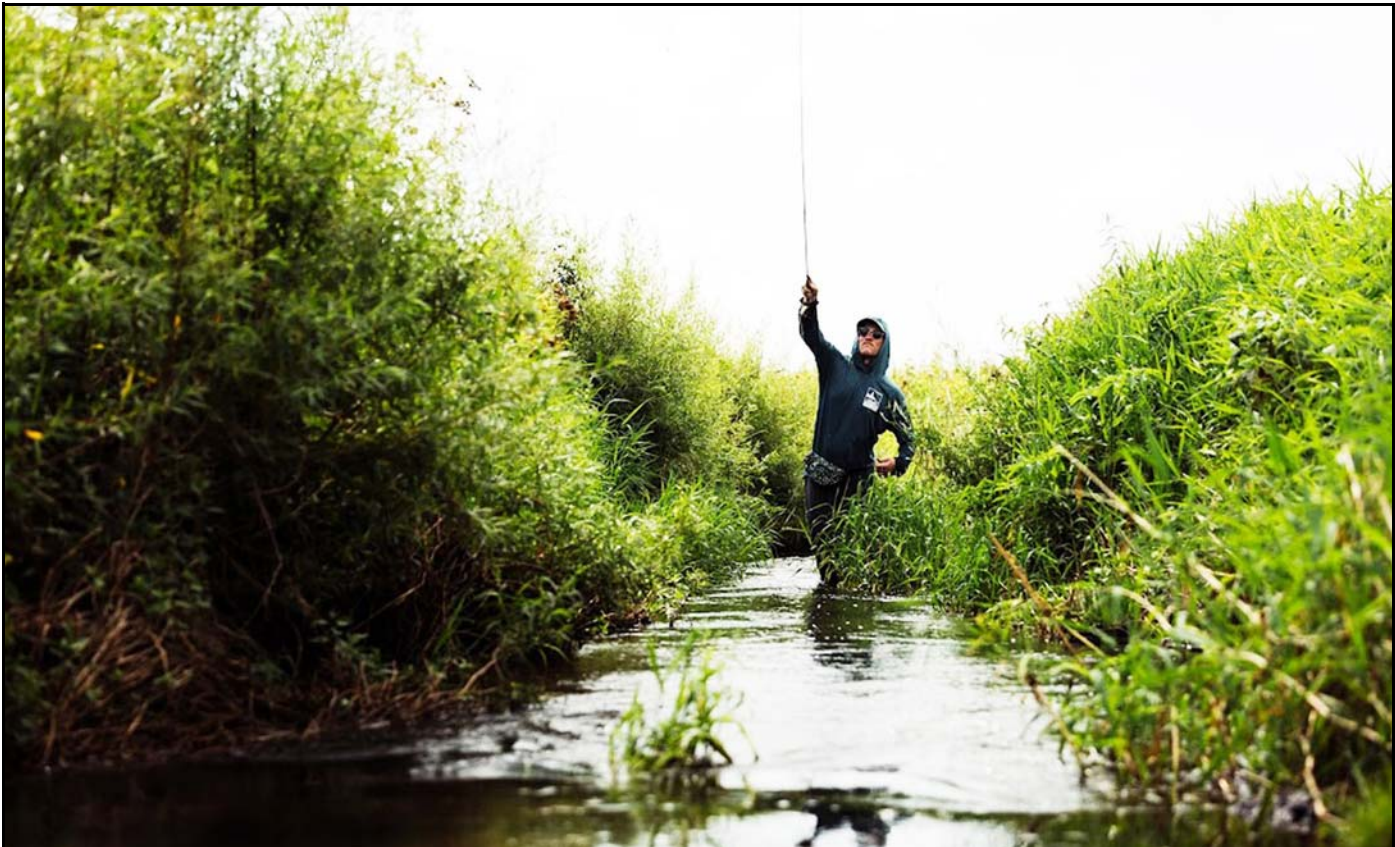
grass, especially on a windy day. You can often reef on your rod and pull your fly out of the grass several times before your tippet starts to fray. Just remember to point your rod tip at the fly and don't reef so hard that you snap that expensive rod tip. Don't ask me how I know not to do that.

Finally, heavy tippet is also your trout-friendly conservation choice. You can bring fish in faster without overplaying them, which is especially important in warm weather.

Tip two: Go long

There are days when trout backpeddle and watch a hopper float for a while before they casually but confidently suck it down.

It's weird that trout become sensitive to drift with hoppers, because when you watch a live hopper fall into the water, it scurries like mad to get back to the bank. But sometimes a decent drift is important, and when it is, my first strategy is not to decrease tippet size, but to increase tippet length. I usually fish a nine-foot leader, but I will go up to 12 feet or more if I sense that fish



A HAVEN FOR SOME HEAVENLY HOPPER FISHING

A narrow stream channel and tall grasses? Game on!