



Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited
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Wisconsin Trout

Summer 2026

Mudsnails found in Vernon County

Words and images by Jason Freund
and Tom Lager

As you may have heard, New Zealand Mudsnails (NZMS) have found their way to Seas Branch in Vernon County. Of course, they had help getting here. Almost always, that help is in the form of anglers and other water users who allow these and other aquatic invasive species (AIS) to spread.

There is no known control mechanism for NZMS, and there are varying reports on how they affect stream ecosystems. At best, they are one more thing to add to the list of threats to our streams. At worst, they are devastating to ecosystems by altering the bottom of the food web and making much of the productivity of streams inaccessible to trout and other fishes.

History of NZMS in Wisconsin

We have had NZMS in Wisconsin for more than a decade. It was found in Black Earth Creek, a popular Dane County stream, in 2012. While their distribution is currently limited – they have been found in 22 Wisconsin streams. Most of these streams have been in Dane and Iowa counties.

However, in more recent years, there has been significant “jump dispersals” to streams in other parts of Wisconsin. In 2024, they were found in Crooked Creek in Grant County and last year, in the Big Green River in Grant County and Big Spring Branch which begins in Iowa County and enters the Blue River in Grant County. Our goal should be to prevent that number from climbing because there is no control mechanism once they reach new streams.

Dispersal is more typically the slow spread of organisms to other suitable habitats (diffusion); whereas jump dispersal refers to rare events where a species moves – or is moved – greater distances which is then followed by their more typical diffusion.

For invasive species such as NZMS, jump dispersal allows them

to reach waters which they would otherwise never diffuse into. In the last couple of years, we have seen more jump dispersal events which are, quite frankly, due to anglers not doing what is asked of them to ensure that are not the vector by which invasive species are spread. NZMS are parthenogenic, meaning embryos develop from unfertilized eggs and only one snail can start a new infestation.

Lager finds rocks covered in snails, suspects NZMS

Longtime TU leader Tom Lager discovered them in Seas Branch, a tributary of the West Fork Kicakapoo near the West Fork Sports Club in Avalanche, he immediately contacted fellow TU leader Jason Freund for his opinion, followed by a call to the DNR.

Tom Lager's story

“For the last evening of our fishing trip, it made sense to us to try a new stream or at least one infrequently fished. As my fishing buddy drove us along Seas Branch Creek on County Y in Vernon County, I related the enjoyment of brook trout fishing in this creek during the Grannom hatch. Throughout the week Grannom were observed flying about, but no strong hatches were encountered.

We decided fishing brookies in Seas Branch would be fun with or without aerial caddis, especially since we had the best Yooper brookie fly along, the Betty.

“My friend fished up from the downstream wooded section, and I started upstream near the transition into the open field section.

As usual, when entering a stream I have not fished for a while, I search rocks and branches for bugs, which provide hints for fishing success. I turned over a rock from the riffle I was standing in, and my gut was wrenched with a deep feeling of dread. The rock was densely encrusted with minute snails, partially smothering cased caddisflies. Instantly I knew these were invasive New Zealand mud snails (NZMS) and that this stream would never be



A DISTURBING DISCOVERY

Longtime TU leader and bug expert Tom Lager was just checking what kind of macroinvertebrates he might find before fishing for some Seas Branch brook trout. What he found instead was this: Rocks and stream bottom covered with an infestation of invasive New Zealand mudsnails.

the same again.

“From the stream, I emailed local Trout Unlimited resources to see if Seas Branch Creek was known to be infested with this invasive mud snail. While waiting for responses, we finished fishing in a foreboding mood. When at our cabin, news arrived that no one knew of mud snails in Seas Branch. The bad news was shared with other trip members and thankfully our Yooper fisher had Formula 409 in his vehicle. We

spent the next hours scrubbing boots and waders, saturating them in Formula 409. Since boots are the most difficult to clean, they were placed in a freezer for the next 11 hours.

“The following day after returning home, mud snail identification was confirmed under a microscope based on US Fish and Wildlife descriptions.

See *Mudsnail*, page 3

Stream tour with Senator Jeff Smith



SHOWING WHY STEWARDSHIP AND TROUT STAMP FUNDS MATTER

Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter leaders guided Sen. Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick) on a stream walk recently along Wilson Creek. One stretch on the North Branch of Wilson Creek has recently been restored by the DNR. What was once a straightened agricultural ditch is now a meandering trout stream again. The project had many notable partners including NRCS, DNR, Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter, the Friends of Wisconsin TU grant program, local landowners and others. We talked about how important the Inland Trout Stamp and the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program are to helping restoration projects like this one get carried out. From left are Bill Heth, Sen. Jeff Smith, Dale Dahlke, Peter Jonas and Mike Kuhr.

Fall meeting Oct. 3 in Wautoma

Enjoy the colors in central Wisconsin and join us at the Wisconsin Council's Fall 2026 meeting in Wautoma. This area is truly an outdoor lover's paradise. We'll be meeting at 9 a.m. at Christiano's Pizza in Wautoma. Meetings always feature important Council business and interesting speakers.

If you have questions about the meeting or you'd like to suggest an item to be placed on the agenda, contact Council Chair Myk Hranicka at 920-627-5779 or jdrflooding@gmail.com.

As always, the Council provides lunch, so please let Myk know if you plan to attend so we can make sure nobody goes hungry.

Keep in mind that all members are welcomed and encouraged to attend, particularly chapter leaders. Not only is it a great place to learn and network with other chapter leaders, but each chapter gets two votes during important Council decisions and elections. We look forward to seeing you in Wautoma.



Visit the Wisconsin Council of TU at wicouncil.tu.org or find us on Facebook.

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TU National is there to help

Do you have a question about your membership status? Are you moving, and you'd like to inform us of the address change so you don't miss an issue of your local chapter newsletter, or Wisconsin Trout or Trout Magazine? Have you changed your email address or phone number and would like TU to know? You can easily find answers to these and many other questions by calling Trout Unlimited customer service at 1-800-834-2419. They are very friendly and very helpful.

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

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Manure spill strikes Danuser Creek

Words and photos by Peter Jonas,
President of the Wisconsin Clear
Waters Chapter

On April 19 a severe manure spill impacted Danuser Creek in Buffalo County. The spill was discovered when an angler saw dead fish in the creek and reported his observations to the DNR.

Danuser Creek is a tributary of Waumandee Creek and a Class 2 trout stream with strong natural reproduction. The fish kill has been substantial and extends approximately 2.5 miles.

The affected area includes 1.5 miles of water from Fleury Road to the confluence with the Waumandee where habitat work has been done and easements acquired. The Waumandee Rod and Gun Club, Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter, the Wisconsin Council of TU, the NRCS, Cabelas/Bass Pro Shops, Buffalo County, TUDARE, the National Fish Habitat Partnership and other conservation organizations have made a substantial investment in habitat projects on Danuser and the Waumandee.

A DNR crew performed investigations for three days following the incident and has followed this up

with additional investigation and a fish survey. The thoroughness of the investigation reflects the quality of Danuser's trout population and the popularity it has among anglers, according to area DNR Fisheries Biologist Zach Woiak.

The DNR did not get reports of dead fish on the Waumandee and due to the high volume of water flowing through the Waumandee in the days after the spill, investigation was impractical. Since the spill, anglers have reported catching trout in the Waumandee below the confluence with Danuser, and even in Danuser itself immediately above the confluence.

Patience will be required for anglers looking forward to a rebound of Danuser's fish population. "Danuser will come back, but it will probably take two to three years to fully recover," Woiak said.

Patience will also be required for citizens and conservationists concerned about accountability and enforcement action related to the spill. According to a source in the DNR, enforcement action is very likely to occur in the Danuser case due to the large scale of the fish kill. Final resolution of the case is likely to take several years.



NATURALLY REPRODUCING BROOK TROUT

Although Danuser Creek is listed as a class 2 stream, it has strong natural reproduction of native brook trout, as seen here.



DANUSER IS A SMALL CREEK WITH SOME SIZEABLE BROWN TROUT

Danuser Creek is a tributary of Waumandee Creek and a Class 2 trout stream with strong natural reproduction. The fish kill has been substantial and extends approximately 2.5 miles. Did this big brown survive the spill?

Mudsnail, from page 1

For additional assurance that the identification was correct, I searched a DNR website and discovered that 17 days earlier the DNR had recorded NZMS in Seas Branch. However, they hadn't yet made the news public.

So I emailed an alert to local and regional TU chapters, DNR fisheries staff and the Driftless Angler fly shop.

Quick response

Once we knew that Seas Branch had NZMS, we acted quickly to get the word out and put together a plan of action. Jason Freund, local senior fisheries biologist Kirk Olson, West Fork Sports Club President Curt Riedl, regional DNR AIS coordinator Shelby Adler and state AIS Program Coordinator Amy Kretlow met online to talk about options.



They suggested that we write a request for a rapid-response grant that would fund signage, the building of wader cleaning stations, monitoring of other streams, a Project Red training day, and the printing and dissemination of AIS and NZMS information.

This led to a meeting the next day with Jason and the AIS coordinators for La Crosse County (David Schumann) and Vernon County (Samer Kharbush) and Vernon County Conservationist David Hettenbach to plan how to proceed in writing the grant. Vernon County will be the grant recipient and we – Coulee Region Trout Unlimited, West Fork Sports Club, and the counties – will work together to place signs and wader cleaning stations and work with the Driftless Angler and other bait and fly shops

to get the word out about NZMS in Seas Branch.

Ecological effects

NZMS are one of the world's most widespread aquatic invasive species and are found on five continents and at least 23 U.S. states.

Their effects are highly variable, and like many invasive species, we often see an immediate surge in their populations followed by a decline to more sustainable levels. A recent study of southern Driftless Area streams showed populations ranging from a few hundred to 70,000 individuals per square meter of stream bottom.

NZMS can disrupt food chains through their competition with other native macroinvertebrates, with grazers the most negatively affected. Grazers refer to macroinvertebrates that consume periphyton and epiphyton (algae, bacteria) that grows on rocks and aquatic plants.

Because NZMS can tie up such a large percentage of the nutrients in a stream, coupled with the fact that while they are consumed by fishes; most of the time, they can pass through fish digestive systems without being digested, or even killed. This means that they have the potential to cause a decline in the condition and growth rates of trout and sculpin.

So far, we have not seen a decline in trout condition – a measure of the health of individual fish – in Wisconsin streams with NZMS. We have, however, seen declines in invertebrate densities with the strongest declines being in mayflies (ephemeroptera) and scuds (amphipoda).

There is an analogy in the aquatic insect decline literature of "death

by a 1,000 paper cuts," and NZMS are one more paper cut. We have seen declining aquatic macroinvertebrate populations due to climate change, other AIS, sedimentation, pesticides, water withdrawals, neonicotinoids and a host of other stressors. NZMS inject yet another potential stressor to our streams.

Preventing the spread

What makes it so difficult to prevent the spread of NZMS is that they can resist drying. Out-of-water survival estimates ranged from 30 to 50 days.

Anglers can help. First, consider having gear that you use only on mudsnail-infested waters, and use it nowhere else. Otherwise, you should clean and decontaminate your fishing gear. There are a host of resources available to anglers,

most of which start with physical cleaning using brushes to reduce material on waders and boots and then include a decontamination step.

Here, there are several options. Among the simplest is freezing gear for several hours. Formula 409 has been shown to be effective against NZMS. Virkon is a commercially available biosecurity product. Both sprays require 10-minutes of wetted exposure and a rinse to be effective.

It is our responsibility to prevent the spread of NZMS and other AIS. A small bit of prevention goes a long way. So determine which preventive strategy works best for you, whether fishing your home waters or travelling to streams afar.



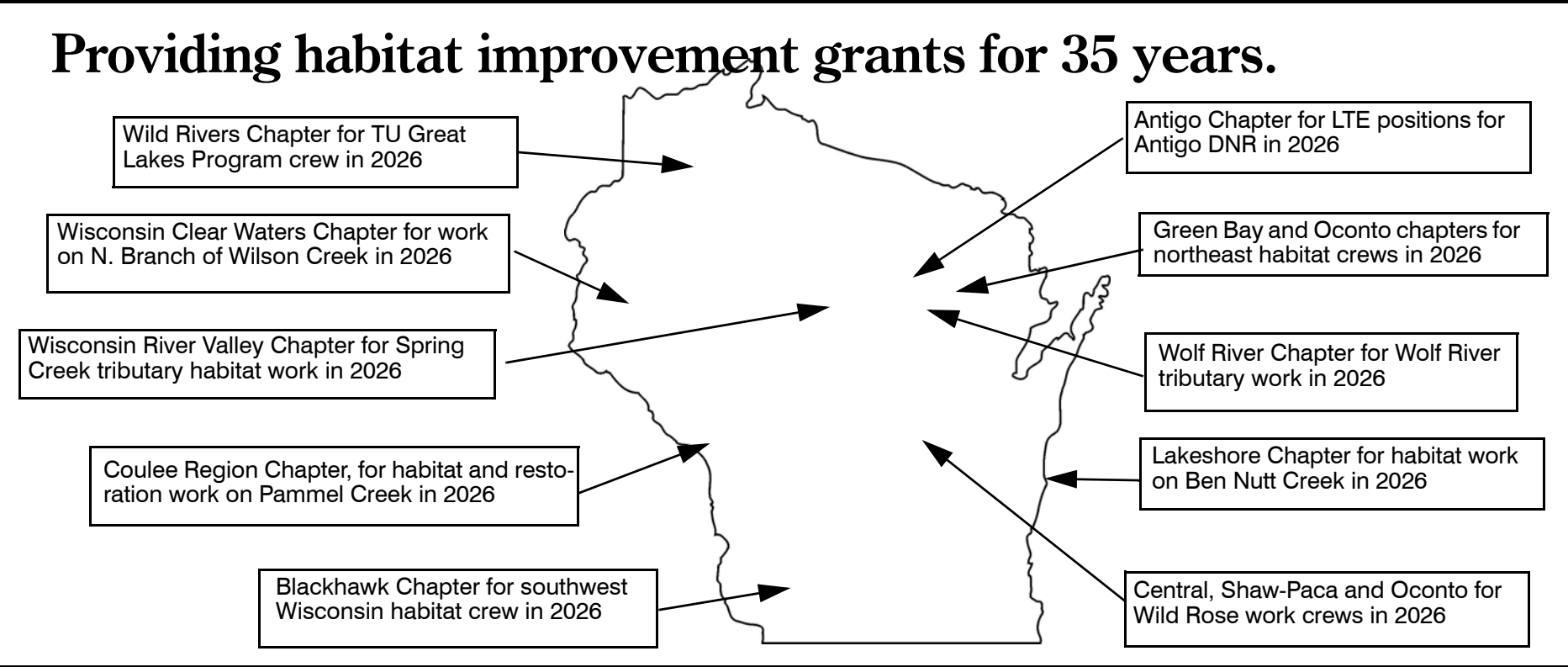
STUDENT RESEARCHERS USING VIRKON TO CLEAN THEIR GEAR

Start with physical cleaning using brushes to reduce material on waders and boots and then include a decontamination step.

Among the simplest methods is freezing gear for several hours. Formula 409 has also been shown to be effective against NZMS. Virkon is a commercially available biosecurity product. Both sprays require 10-minutes of wetted exposure and a rinse to be effective.

Become a Friend. Support habitat work.

The 2026 Friends of Wisconsin TU grants are now being put to use throughout the state, as seen in the map below. These grants wouldn't be possible without the generous donations from Friends of Wisconsin TU. Thank you so much for your support.



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Yes, I want to join the "Friends" of Wisconsin TU.

Enclosed is my check, payable to Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited.

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

Name _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____ Phone # _____

New tax law change regarding donations

\$1,000 per-person deduction now available to those who use the standard deduction. \$2,000 for a joint return. No need to itemize.

The tax year 2026 brings a significant difference in how tax payers will be allowed to deduct contributions to charitable organizations. In recent years only those who itemized have been allowed to directly deduct their contributions from their total income. The problem has been that approximately 90 percent of tax filers no longer itemize because the standard deduction has been raised to the point where most tax payers are better off using the standard deduction instead of itemizing. That has meant that many donors have not seen a tax break for donating to charitable causes. Now a change in the tax code will hopefully allow programs like the State Council’s Friends of Wisconsin TU and Watershed Access Fund to benefit from increased contributions. Starting with the 2026 tax year, donors will now be able to deduct up to \$1,000 (\$2,000 if filing a joint return) from their taxable income for donations to any qualifying 501(c)(3) nonprofit. That deduction is available to taxpayers who use the standard deduction and do not itemize. The deduction is only available for donations made with cash, checks or credit cards. Donations of clothing or other material goods are not allowed. If you use the new deduction, be sure to retain proof of your donations in case of an audit. Acknowledgement letters from the charities should also be saved. In the case of donations to our Friends and Watershed programs, all donors who send contributions are provided with a “Thank You” letter, which serves this purpose. Donors who have been giving part or all of their IRA required minimum distributions to charity are allowed to continue those donations just as they have been doing for the last few years. As always, be sure to check with your financial advisor to make sure your donations are appropriate and allowable for your individual situation.

Good news for Friends and Watershed programs

By Kim McCarthy,
Grant Program Coordinator

Grant limit now \$4,000

At the recent Council meeting in Avalanche, Council leaders voted to raise the maximum amount chapters can request for a Friends of Wisconsin Trout Unlimited grant to \$4,000. The previous maximum amount had been \$2,500. Support from our donors has been strong for the last couple of years, which is why we were able to make the increase. Chapters will be able to apply for the new maximum amount when the 2027 grant request period begins in December. Our generous donors made this increase possible. In just a few years we’ve doubled the grant amount, thanks to the incredible support of our donors. Friends is funded 100 by voluntary contributions and our donors have been a very loyal and ever increasing base of support for the program. We want to offer a very sincere THANK YOU to all of our supporters who have made the increase possible.

Watershed Access Fund

We have some good news to report from our Watershed Access Fund. We have been able to

partner with the Landmark Conservancy to help purchase a piece of property along the White River near Ashland. Both the Trout Unlimited Watershed Access Fund and the Wild Rivers Chapter were approached to see if we could help with the funding and we agreed to assist with the acquisition. The property became available following the closure of Northland College, which owned some properties in their area and put them up for sale as part of the liquidation process. There was a very real possibility that this parcel might become privately owned, but Landmark Conservancy reached an agreement to purchase it and make it publicly accessible. This acquisition will be a great addition to the public holdings along the famous White River. Hex hatch followers will now have another option for accessing this amazing fishery. Many thanks to the Watershed Access Fund donors who make this type of acquisition possible. There would be no way for the Council to participate in this type of opportunity without all of the members and friends who make voluntary contributions to the fund.

Watershed Access Fund: Obtaining public access

The Watershed Access Fund supports the acquisition of easements and properties to increase public access on our trout streams. We are currently in negotiations to help acquire a significant amount of access on a well-known northern trout stream. We hope to share more about this in a future issue Wisconsin Trout

Our Watershed Access Fund Contributors

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Gene Mueller	Monona, WI		Stoughton, WI
David & Deb Muresan	Viroqua, WI	Ronald Suslick	Peshigo, WI
In Memory of John Nebel	Menasha, WI	Jay Thurston	Viroqua, WI
Doug Nelson	Appleton, WI	John Tweddale	Madison, WI
Paul Neuman	Baileys Harbor, WI	Dennis Vanden Bloomen &	
Cheryl & Winston Ostrow	Viroqua, WI	Becky Flynn	Eau Claire, WI
Randy Rake	Helena, MT	Greg Vodak	Stoughton, WI
Bob Retko	Viroqua, WI	Scott & Holly Wagner	Hudson, WI
Kenneth Rizzo	Oconomowoc	David Wahl	Lakewood Ranch, FL
David Rohde	Waukesha, WI	Don Welhouse	Kaukauna, WI
John Rose	White Lake, WI	Topf Wells & Sally Probasco	Madison, WI
Tom Ryan	Whitefish Bay, WI	Paul Williams	Madison, WI
Joseph Saiz	Edina, MN	Jim Willis	Birchwood, WI
Jack Saltes	Mount Horeb, WI	Bill Wisler	Dodgeville, WI
Charles Sanders	Middleton, WI	Don Wolf	Madison, WI
Michael San Dretto	Neenah, WI		
Jack Saunders	Beaver Dam, WI	TU CHAPTERS	
Jeff & Mary Schmoeger	Lake Mills, WI	Antigo Chapter	Antigo, WI
Daniel Schoenherr	Menomonee Falls, WI	Green Bay Chapter	Green Bay
Dean Schoenike	Shawano, WI	Kiap-TU-Wish Chap.	Hudson, WI
		Lakeshore Chapter	Sheb. Falls
		Marinette Chapter	Marinette, WI
		Wis. Clear Waters	Eau Claire, WI

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

Payable to: Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited

MAIL TO: Kim McCarthy	Name
736 Meadowbrook Court	Address
Green Bay WI 54313	City, State, Zip
	Phone

Updates from the field



WILLOW PINGEL IS THE LEAD TECH THIS YEAR
Willow Pingel returned this summer with Trout Unlimited as the Wisconsin crew lead technician.

By Danielle Nelson, TU Northern Wisconsin Project Coordinator

As we take to the field for another productive season, here’s a little introduction to this year’s seasonal technicians and a preview of what we have in store for the year. We have two returning technicians this year, so you may recognize their names or faces from previous articles or social media posts.

Field activities

We have another diverse slate of projects on deck for the season. The technicians will continue road-stream crossing inventories for another year, focusing efforts on the Montreal River watershed in Iron County. These road-stream crossing inventories are part of a larger effort in the Northwest region to identify flood-prone infrastructure and barriers to fish passage. We use this data to locate projects that will not only benefit our native coldwater brook trout, but local communities as well.

We’ll also continue our brook trout population monitoring efforts at sites that are slated for habitat or infrastructure improvements in the coming years. Monitoring the fish populations and community structures at a subset of our project sites is an important step in our project cycle and just one of the ways that we measure project success.

Finally, we’ll be back in Bayfield and Ashland counties this fall to survey Lake Superior tributaries for coaster brook trout as part of a regional initiative to map the extent of these unique fish. “Coasters” are brook trout that spend a portion of their lives in Lake Superior and were once ubiquitous on our north shore and throughout the coastal areas of Michigan, Minnesota and Canada.

Today, the geographical extent and population numbers of these unique brook trout are much smaller than in the past so we’re working with regional partners to understand why. Throughout this process, we’ll be surveying many miles of Lake Superior tributaries so we can collect lengths, weights and fin clips of brook trout we find in Lake Superior-connected streams. Genetic information obtained from the fin clips will shed light on whether the fish we find in the field have spent any of their recent time in Lake Su-

perior. We’ll then use this information to examine patterns among the streams these coaster brook trout call home and locate potential areas for restoration. All in all, it will be another busy and productive season for the Wisconsin crew, and I can’t wait to share our season’s accomplishments with you in the fall.

Our 2026 techs

Our 2026 seasonal technicians includes two returnees who were drawn back by good vibes, fun days in the field, and of course: the fish. They’re looking forward to getting back into the water and surveying for more coaster brook trout later in the summer. In the meantime, they’re excited to get back to camping and discovering things they’ve never seen before

Willow Pingel returned this summer with Trout Unlimited as the Wisconsin crew lead technician.

Nolan Feasel has returned for his second season with us. He is entering his final year at UW-Madison studying conservation biology, environmental sciences and zoology. In his free time he enjoys birding, fishing, running and spending time outdoors. He is excited to return to the field to work in freshwater streams again.

Ben Leyva hails from the West Coast and grew up in a family of whitewater enthusiasts, and his passion for rivers stems from the rafting trips that defined his youth. Discovering fly fishing as an adult inspired him to change careers with the goal of helping protect the places and species that bring him joy and solace. Ben holds a B.S. in Fish and Wildlife Conservation from Oregon State University and is an experienced field biologist. He has worked with private restoration practitioners as well as state agencies, including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR). Ben is excited for the opportunity to contribute to Trout Unlimited mission while continuing to develop his network and deepen his sense of place within the Great Lakes region.



TU’S 2026 WISCONSIN CREW
From left are Nolan Feasel, Danielle Nelson (TU Northern Wisconsin Project Coordinator), Ben Leyva, Katti Renik (TU Great Lakes Project Coordinator) and Willow Pingel.



BEN LEYVA HAILS FROM THE WEST COAST
He grew up in a family of whitewater enthusiasts and fell in love with rivers.



NOLAN FEASEL ALSO RETURNED FOR THE 2026 SEASON
Nolan Feasel has returned for his second season with us. He is entering his final year at UW-Madison studying conservation biology, environmental sciences and zoology.

Fancy Creek Project completes milestone

By Sara Strassman, Driftless Area Program Manager

The Trout Unlimited partnership project on Fancy Creek has recently completed a significant chapter, as the flow was diverted out of the ditch and back into the meandering channel.

The project was designed to remove the impacts of the ditch on Fancy Creek by returning flow to the original meandering channel. This will significantly increase connectivity with the floodplain, while improving the wetland hydrology to support sedge meadow wetland species. Increased floodplain connectivity will reduce streambank erosion and improve sediment and nutrient dynamics within the stream channel and downstream on the Pine River. The project will also significantly improve habitat for fish, macroinvertebrates and herptiles through the installation of riffles, pools and large wood and the creation of off-channel habitats.

In early June, fish were removed from the ditch in advance of the flow diversion. The .8-mile-long reach held 230 brown trout, fewer than 10 brook trout, but nearly 60 mottled sculpin. Compared to similar lengths of stream in the Driftless Area and statewide, this is a relatively modest density of fish, reflecting the habitat limitations of the ditch channel. We are eager to see how this section will rate during future monitoring efforts in the new



Tom Rohrer, Mississippi Valley Conservancy

OPERATION RELOCATION
TU seasonal technicians work with the DNR’s Mike Miller to measure and record fish species during fish relocation at the Fancy Creek restoration project.

channel.

Flow has been diverted to the meandered channel to allow for construction of ditch-plug features

that will keep flow out of the former ditch. The recent rains have tested the channel and everything is performing as expected. Active con-

struction is expected to continue into early July, when the site should be fully constructed and finished off with seed and mulch. The new channel and features will continue to adjust as we receive sizable rain events. This will include some anticipated scour of sediments in areas of the new channel. Fancy Creek is usually turbid when it arrives at our restored reach, so it will be difficult to visualize the beneficial scour activity occurring at our site until after flows have receded and cleared. We are actively monitoring with cameras, surface and groundwater instruments and field inspections.

The site is of special interest to agency staff who have tested the new Wisconsin DNR Hydrologic Restoration GP-22 at this project. We will continue to host site inspections with partners to evaluate the project performance and outcomes. We are creating a short film to document the project to help us share the lessons learned in permitting, design and fundraising along with the ecological response of the stream and wetlands to the project.



Sara Strassman, TUDARE

FANCY CREEK’S RESTORED CHANNEL INCLUDES FEATURES LIKE THESE ROOT WADS



What will your legacy be?

Help support our mission of coldwater conservation in Wisconsin

Make a tax-deductible gift through your will, trust, life insurance or retirement account to the

Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited Fund

Contact Ben Strand at the Natural Resources Foundation at Ben.Strand@WisConservation.org or 608-409-3133

What legacy would you like to leave?

The Wisconsin Council of TU now has a permanent endowment fund entitled the Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited Fund.

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

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

You can donate to the Wisconsin Council of TU Fund by:

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

More information on all of these options is available by contacting Ben Strand at Ben.Strand@WisConservation.org.

TU recognizes Florence as a “Conservation Town”

“America needs to develop our natural resources, and conservation towns are a celebration of how to do that in a smart and collaborative manner.” (Chris Wood, TU President/CEO)

By Trout Unlimited staff

Trout Unlimited has recognized the Town of Florence as one of five “Conservation Towns,” rural communities that survived the past century’s boom-and-bust cycles and are building new blueprints for economic success by tapping into their most important assets: The rivers and streams, public lands and wild landscapes that have always sustained them.

We are putting a spotlight on these communities at the heart of the work we do to care for and recover rivers and streams, because the leaders in these communities embody the conservation spirit and model what it means to be a champion for your rivers, your communities and your fisheries.

“America needs to develop our natural resources, and conservation towns are a celebration of how to do that in a smart and collaborative manner,” says Chris Wood, TU’s president and CEO. “Trout Unlimited works with large and small communities across the country, helping them to care for and recover our nation’s cherished public lands and waters. We’re proud to spotlight these communities, their river champions and the innovative approaches they’ve taken to make the lives of people in their community better.”

These are the towns rolling up their sleeves, getting dirt under their fingernails and doing the work to care for and recover America’s incredible public-lands and waters.

The fact that there isn’t a single stoplight in the entire county, including the town of Florence, is a matter of pride.

What the county lacks in stoplights and population, it makes up for in streams and fish. Collaborating with a host of partners, TU has been working hard to improve the health of the area’s streams. The Pine and Popple rivers are two of the county’s crown jewels.

The winding, scenic rivers draw lots of paddlers and are so appreciated by locals that they inspired the construction of the Wild Rivers Interpretive Center, a joint project of the U.S. Forest Service and Florence. While those two rivers get a little too warm in the heat of summer, trout from many tributaries move between the fertile larger rivers and the smaller, cooler streams.

“It’s amazing angling with light pressure,” says Chris Collier, who manages TU’s projects in the region.

“The Pine and Popple Wild Rivers were uniquely set aside by state law in 1965 and Florence County promotes the Wild Rivers as a destination,” said Wild River Interpretive Center Director Wendy Gelhoff.



YOU WON’T FIND A SINGLE STOPLIGHT, BUT THERE ARE PLENTY OF WATERFALLS
TU is putting a spotlight on these communities at the heart of the work we do to care for and recover rivers and streams, because the leaders in these communities embody the conservation spirit and model what it means to be a champion for your rivers, your communities and your fisheries.

“Many people who spend time on the rivers share that they feel like they are in Canada thanks to the undeveloped and sometimes rugged terrain they encounter along the state-, county-, and federally-owned lands that protect these wild rivers.”

“These unique rivers offer activities for many types of outdoor recreation, such as trout fishing, paddling, hiking, bird watching and tubing. There are also eight waterfalls to explore and photograph, including Breakwater Falls, which is the sixth-largest waterfall in Wisconsin.”

“Many people who spend time on the rivers share that they feel like they are in Canada thanks to the undeveloped and sometimes rugged terrain they encounter along the state, county and federal owned lands that protect these Wild Rivers.”

Much of TU’s work with partners such as the county’s land conservation office, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Forest Service consists of addressing barriers to fish passage, removing undersized and perched culverts and replacing them with fish- and paddler-friendly structures.

TU has completed several such projects to date, with several more in the works.

Expanding the amount of habitat the region’s native brook trout can reach for feeding, spawning and finding coldwater refugia during the heat of summer means that those already robust trout populations will just keep getting better.



MEYERS FALLS IS AMONG EIGHT TO EXPLORE IN FLORENCE
These unique rivers offer activities for many types of outdoor recreation, such as trout fishing, paddling, hiking, bird watching and tubing. There are also eight waterfalls to explore and photograph, including Breakwater Falls, which is the sixth-largest waterfall in Wisconsin.

Dave Platz

Bois Brule roads are getting an upgrade

Trout Unlimited leads road infrastructure upgrades to improve safety and restore fish passage in the Bois Brule Watershed.



Scott Allen

LITTLE BOIS BRULE RIVER CULVERTS TO BE REPLACED

The undersized and perched culverts on the Little Bois Brule River at Ranger Road will be replaced this year.

By Jamie Vaughn, TU Great Lakes Engagement Manager

In partnership with local, state and federal agencies, TU is upgrading road infrastructure in the Bois Brule River watershed this summer to improve public safety, flood resilience and river health. The projects are part of a multi-year initiative investing more than \$2 million in northern Wisconsin communities. The ambitious effort will benefit residents, anglers and fish alike.

Locals may encounter construction activities associated with the two infrastructure projects located near the Town of Brule. The projects, on the Little Bois Brule River at Ranger Road and Sandy Run Creek along Highway 27, will replace aging culverts that are too small and too high, restricting water

flow and preventing fish movement.

With improved road-stream crossing design, fish and other aquatic organisms can once again move from the iconic Bois Brule River into the Little Bois Brule and Sandy Run Creek that provide abundant cold water and habitat for foraging, spawning and other important functions.

Often referred to as the “River of Presidents” for its history of hosting five U.S. presidents and their fishing pursuits, the storied Bois Brule River is one of Wisconsin’s most quintessential trout streams. Known for its lake-run fish and potential to support unique migratory coaster brook trout, the river is a first-class fishing destination and a treasured natural and economic resource.

The upcoming work in this be-

loved watershed builds on earlier projects that kicked off in 2023 on Wilson Creek, a Class I trout stream and tributary to the Bois Brule River. TU and partners completed three projects that removed fish barriers and fully reconnected Wilson Creek by replacing failing culverts.

But fish aren’t the only beneficiaries of removing barriers. Communities benefit because connected rivers and streams protect human life and property by conveying water and dissipating the destructive power of floods.

The importance of resilient infrastructure is well known across northern Wisconsin. Since 2012, the region has experienced six federal disaster declarations due to severe storms that caused widespread road failures.

By identifying and replacing vulnerable, aging and undersized road-stream crossings before disasters occur, communities can reduce long-term maintenance costs, maintain emergency access during storms and minimize flood damage.

Additional projects are in the planning stages, including a future culvert replacement on Rocky Run at Highway H. Funding has been secured for initial survey and design work, and TU is pursuing additional support for construction in coordination with Douglas County and the Town of Brule.

In total, these projects will open more than 13 miles of high-quality coldwater habitat and reconnect the essential tributaries with the 44-

mile mainstem Bois Brule River.

“Our mission at TU is to bring communities together to care for their rivers,” said Scott Allen, TU’s engineer working in the region. “We’re doing that in the Bois Brule watershed by leveraging one-time funding opportunities to replace undersized culverts in order to protect infrastructure while promoting fish passage. The Bois Brule is a beloved coldwater fishery and an asset to the local community. These road-stream crossing investments allow trout access to vital upstream habitat, which benefits the environment, the anglers and the local economy.”

This work builds upon the decades-long efforts of groups like the Brule River Sportsmen’s Club and Wild Rivers Chapter of Trout Unlimited, which have long been stewarding the watershed with resolute dedication to conserve the Brule’s cold, clean waters and inspire a community of river champions to care for it.

These projects are made possible by the support and contributions of many partners and funders including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Community-based Restoration Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Trout and Salmon Foundation, Douglas County, the Town of Solon Springs and the Town of Brule.

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 2027 awards, which we will bestow at our awards banquet on January 23, 2027. 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, 2026. 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 and Kim McCarthy and Myk Hranicka. 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.

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



Regulations versus habitat: What's more important?

Insights from Elk Creek

By **Matthew Mitro, Wisconsin DNR
Office of Applied Science,
Fisheries Team**

Questions pertaining to fishing regulations are a common topic of conversation among trout managers and trout anglers alike. Most recently, trout regulations have crossed my desk in discussions of potential regulation changes to be considered in the next Spring Hearings and in reviewing surveys of trout angler opinions on trout fishing regulations.

As a scientist, I'm interested in understanding how trout fishing regulations work in practice. More specifically, what objectives are regulations intended to address, and do regulations successfully meet those objectives?

At a broad scale, fishing regulations can be expected to address socio-economic objectives and biological objectives. Socio-economic-based regulations help allocate trout among anglers. I think trout fishing regulations in the form of size and bag limits are generally very good at allocating the resource among anglers and preventing a small minority from harvesting too many trout.

I think fishing regulations are also generally very good at addressing biological objectives.

Size and bag limits typically work well at protecting wild trout populations to ensure they remain self-sustaining and provide quality fisheries. But here is where things get a little tricky.

High expectations

Some managers and anglers also expect size and bag limits to effect changes in abundance and size structure. Or more specifically, changes in the abundance of larger-sized trout. Here I do not think regulations necessarily work as intended.

One reason I think size and bag limits usually don't work as intended is because we generally do not know how regulations affect trout angling behavior in practice. Regulations probably work best, in terms of eliciting a measurable outcome, when angling effort, catch, and harvest are heavy. If a lot of people are catching and harvesting their allowable limit of trout from a stream, size and bag limits will likely have a measurable effect on trout abundance and size structure.

Conversely, if a large percentage of trout anglers choose to practice catch-and-release, size and bag limits may have little to no effect. Unless we conduct a comprehensive creel survey, we generally do not know how many trout are harvested from any given stream.

Harvest pressure now low

Heavy harvest pressure on trout fisheries was common back in Bob Hunt's day when he was researching brook trout angling regulations on Lawrence Creek. Many trout anglers at that time were harvest-oriented. Hunt was a strong proponent of minimum size limits to protect most trout in each new year class so that they had a chance to spawn at least once. It is logical to think that protecting spawners is a good thing, particularly when harvest pressure is heavy.

We have moved away from protecting first-time spawners using minimum size limits in many

streams because our trout populations are now generally very abundant and harvest pressure is now generally very low. This is particularly the case for brown trout, which tend to be more difficult to catch than brook trout.

Our current base regulation of no minimum size limit and a daily bag limit of five trout is largely used to encourage harvest, as no trout are protected from potential harvest. But there is also an intention for this base regulation to effect changes in size structure by reducing trout density.

Some special regulations take this objective further by encouraging harvest of smaller trout while protecting larger trout. One example is a maximum size limit where anglers can only keep trout under 12 inches in length. Another example is allowing anglers to keep multiple small trout but only one over 12 inches. Such regulations, while well intended, generally fall below the mark when it comes to affecting size structure.

Before I illustrate why I think regulations intended to enhance size structure generally do not work in our current trout fishing environment, I want to refer to an article Bob Behnke wrote for TU's fall 1989 issue of Trout magazine entitled, "We're putting them back alive." Behnke's article explained what makes special regulations that limit harvest in various ways work. The success of special regulations is usually related to fishing effort and a trout species' susceptibility to being caught. Restrictive regulations protecting cutthroat trout in high-pressure Yellowstone National Park fisheries is the classic example. But in my view, the most important message in Behnke's article was that the effects of special regulations pale in comparison to the negative effects of environmental degradation and, conversely, the positive effects of protecting and restoring degraded streams.

I am going to illustrate how environmental conditions can override changes in regulations as a determinant of brown trout abundance and size structure using data I collected in Elk Creek, a Driftless Area stream in Richland and Vernon counties, from 2004 to 2025.

When I began sampling Elk Creek in 2004, the trout fishery was managed with a 9-inch minimum size limit and a daily bag limit of 3

trout. According to Bob Hunt, this regulation was designed to protect first-time spawners, because brown trout generally mature after reaching 9 inches in length. This regulation was in effect through 2015. Following the DNR's review of trout regulations in 2015, the regulations on Elk Creek changed in 2016 to a daily bag limit of 3 trout less than 12 inches in length. In 2020, the daily bag limit was increased to 5, but trout still had to be less than 12 inches to be legal to harvest. This regulation ran through 2025.

The changes in regulations since 2015 have been aimed at encouraging harvest of small trout and protecting large trout. In other words, these regulations were intended to improve size structure such that larger trout would become more abundant in Elk Creek. That unfortunately did not happen.

The PSD metric

A simple metric commonly used by fisheries managers to describe the relative abundance of large fish in a population is the proportional size distribution (PSD). PSD is calculated as the number of quality-length fish divided by the number of stock-length fish multiplied times 100. Stock-length fish are all fish above a minimum length that are typically sampled in a fish survey and provide recreational value to anglers. Quality-length fish are larger and of a size anglers generally consider acceptable to harvest. These lengths vary by species. For brown trout, stock-length is ≥ 6 inches and quality-length is ≥ 9 inches. Proportional size distribution can also be used to quantify brown trout in larger length categories: PSD-P (preferred, ≥ 12 inches), PSD-M (memorable, ≥ 15 inches), and PSD-T (trophy, ≥ 18 inches).

A major change in trout habitat occurred in Elk Creek when beavers began building dams in early 2017. Over the next three years, beavers built more than 25 dams throughout the stream channel, with most dams persisting through 2025. Here I am going to show how size distribution indices describe the size structure of brown trout in Elk Creek before (2004-2016) and after (2021-2025) beaver dams were built throughout the stream.

Elk Creek was surveyed each April and October at five or six

sites. Although size distribution indices like PSD typically require sampling across the entire length of a stream to characterize the whole trout population, here I am limiting data to the four sites upstream of the furthest downstream beaver dam. This excludes downstream sites in which trout could freely move between Elk Creek and the Kickapoo River.

The PSD was 38 for 2004-2016 and 37 for 2021-2025 (Table 1). Essentially about the same. These values are very close to the lower end of the range of PSD values for what we might call a balanced trout population (PSD from 40 to 60). Lower values indicate smaller fish dominate the fishery; higher values imply larger fish make up a higher proportion of the fishery.

The PSD values for larger length categories tell a somewhat different story. Preferred, memorable, and trophy-length brown trout appeared underrepresented after beavers changed the habitat in Elk Creek (Table 1). PSD values are typically reported as whole numbers, but I reported some of them to the first decimal place to better capture the change. PSD-Preferred dropped by about 50 percent, PSD-Memorable by about 60 percent, and PSD-Trophy went to zero as we never saw any trophy-length trout at these survey sites in 2021-2025. The only trophy-length trout in Elk Creek at that time were in the lower reaches with unobstructed access to the Kickapoo River.

The PSD metric based on quality-length fish does not appear to capture the loss of larger brown trout from Elk Creek; the PSD metrics for larger length categories do to some extent. This is probably because 6 to 12-inch trout are so numerous relative to larger trout during both time periods. This may simply be a feature of small streams with abundant trout populations. Large trout are rarely, if ever, overly numerous compared to smaller trout, but they do occur and are an important and desired part of the fishery.

What has changed in Elk Creek after beavers built numerous dams is trout abundance. The numbers of trout we caught in our fixed survey sites for calculating proportional size distributions can serve as indices of abundance. The average number of stock-length brown trout caught per year (trout ≥ 6 inches)



BEAVERS MAKE QUICK WORK OF REPLACING DAM

Biologists electrofish Elk Creek in April near a beaver dam that was rebuilt after having been removed last November.

Table 2. Average number of brown trout sampled per year in Elk Creek upstream of the furthest downstream beaver dam for the 2004–2016 (no beaver dams) and 2021–2025 (beaver dams) time periods and the percent change between time periods.

Length categories		Average # trout per year sampled		Percent change
		No beaver dams 2004–2016	Beaver dams 2021–2025	
Stock	≥6 in	1,248	974	-22%
Quality	≥9 in	473	363	-23%
Preferred	≥12 in	47	21	-56%
Memorable	≥15 in	6	2	-58%
Trophy	≥18 in	1	0	-100%

decreased by about 22 percent between the 2004-2016 and 2021-2025 time periods. Decreases in larger length categories were even greater (Table 2).

A question debated by fisheries scientists is whether size distribution indices reflect changes in density and population dynamics. The answer, perhaps not surprisingly, is that it depends. If the answer is yes, then as trout abundance increases towards carrying capacity, PSD should decrease as growth rates decline. If growth rates increase at lower trout densities, PSD should

increase. PSD can, however, be low when density is low because of poor habitat, poor food supply, or overharvest by anglers. There is no reason to believe that the change in angling regulations or overharvest drove the decline in trout abundance in Elk Creek. The regulations in 2016 and thereafter were enacted to protect preferred, memorable, and trophy-length trout, which could not be legally harvested. But there is reason to believe habitat conditions, degraded by beaver activity, negatively affected trout.

Changes in habitat conditions,

Table 1. Proportional stock distribution (PSD) for quality, preferred, memorable, and trophy-length brown trout in Elk Creek for the 2004–2016 (no beaver dams) and 2021–2025 (beaver dams) time periods.

Length categories			Proportional size distribution	
			No beaver dams 2004–2016	Beaver dams 2021–2025
Stock	≥6 in			
Quality	≥9 in	PSD	38	37
Preferred	≥12 in	PSD-P	4	2
Memorable	≥15 in	PSD-M	0.5	0.2
Trophy	≥18 in	PSD-T	0.1	0.0

decreases in trout abundance, and perhaps other unknown factors may be confounded in PSD values for brown trout in Elk Creek. It is for this reason that we should be cautious in relying on any one metric alone like PSD to evaluate changes in a fishery or the efficacy of angling regulations. Elk Creek is also a reminder that habitat usually matters more than regulations.

If you fish Elk Creek and want to harvest trout, note that the regulations changed again in 2026. You can still keep up to 5 trout per day with no minimum size limit, but 1

trout you keep can now be over 12 inches. Your best bet for finding a preferred, memorable, or trophy-length brown trout in Elk Creek will be in the lower reaches downstream of the remaining beaver dams, where larger trout can freely move in and out of the Kickapoo River.



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Make a tax-deductible gift through your will, trust, life insurance or retirement account to the

Wisconsin State Council of Trout Unlimited Fund

Contact Ben Strand at the Natural Resources Foundation at Ben.Strand@WisConservation.org or 608-409-3133

Spring Hearing results available

Trout stamp increase sees broad support.

The DNR released the results from the April Spring Hearings. You can find them on the DNR website.

We were excited to see broad support for a \$6 increase in the Inland Trout Stamp. The proposal received 4,004 yes votes and 1,031 no votes, meaning 79.5 percent of voters support increasing the stamp price. It passed in 69 counties, tied in two and failed in one (Marquette County).

This represents an increase in public support since the question was last asked in 2019. At that time 70 percent of respondents supported a \$5 increase.

What legacy would you like to leave?

The Wisconsin Council of TU now has a permanent endowment fund entitled the Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited Fund.

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

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

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

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

More information on all of these options is available by contacting Ben Strand at Ben.Strand@WisConservation.org.

Mining update

By Johnson Bridgwater, River Alliance of Wisconsin

River Alliance creates updated map

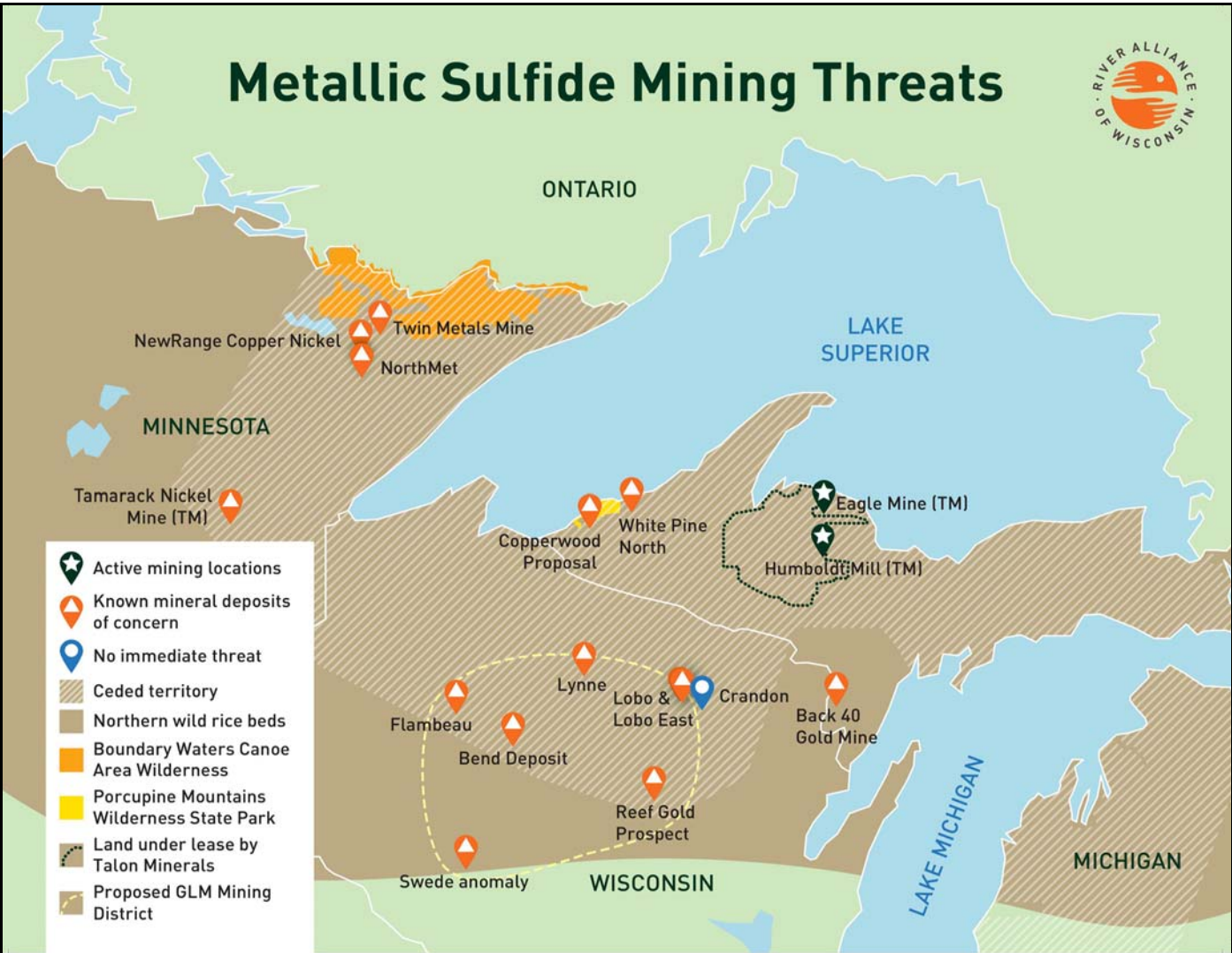
A big part of my job is keeping track of potential threats to our amazing water resources, and River Alliance of Wisconsin is happy to share our revised Metallic Sulfide Mining Threats map. It is intended to educate people in our region on what is currently being actively pursued on the ground. Remember, metallic sulfide mining is nothing like your grandfather's iron or taconite mining.

This map depicts the northern half of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, which all share three things in common— these areas hold northern wild rice (*Ziziana palustris*), align with the previously designated “Ceded Territories,” and all happen to be where metallic sulfide mining is moving to the forefront. Other than a single mine on this map that is already in operation, the majority of the map is dedicated to emerging threats.

GreenLight Metals seeks prospecting permit

Canadian company GreenLight Metals (GLM) continues to pursue their drilling program in Taylor County, Wisconsin, within the Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest. However, their third drilling program has expanded and they are now seeking a “Federal Prospecting Permit” to drill the acreage surrounding the 40 they are now drilling. They would be drilling federal minerals in this third phase, and so the permitting process is done via the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

River Alliance, a number of local groups, and a statewide mining watchdog are all tuned in and engaged in this process every step of the way, and we now know this phase will require an Environmental Assessment (EA) as part of the permitting process. Stay tuned, as we expect to learn more information about this project as summer goes on.



Professor, advocate Al Gedicks passes away

UW-Lacrosse Professor and Wisconsin environmental justice advocate Al Gedicks passed away recently. River Alliance of Wisconsin, along with many others, are planning a memorial in Keshena, Wisconsin on Saturday, July 18 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. If you'd like to attend or perhaps support the memorial financially, contact me.

River Alliance of Wisconsin Executive Director Allison Werner, had this to say.

“We were saddened to hear about the passing of Al Gedicks. If you knew him, you got to witness a kind, gentle and passionate activist-academic who dedicated his life to the understanding and respect of Indigenous and local leaders who resist extractive industries, both in

Wisconsin and around the world.

His determination and commitment to arming activists with academic research on mining will be missed, but his legacy of empowering people to stand up to mining companies lives on whenever we look at places like the beauty of the Penokee Hills rather than an open-pit iron mine in northern Wisconsin. May his memory be a blessing and an inspiration for all of us who carry on this work.”

Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness update

Many Wisconsinites regularly enjoy the BWCAW. Although what exactly happened regarding the passage of HJR140 federally is quite complex, the outcome is quite clear: Elected officials, including representatives of Minnesota, have for-

mally voted to remove protections for the Rainy Lake watershed, which shares a border with BWCAW. If you are interested in this issue, visit Friends of the Boundary Waters website: <https://www.friends-bwca.org/> They have stepped forward to meet these challenges.

Questions or comments? Contact Johnson

Feel free to contact me at jbridgwater@wisconsinrivers.org about all things mining. You can also visit River Alliance of Wisconsin's Mining Page for online resources dedicated to mining education. You can also sign up for our “Mining Updates” email at <https://wisconsinrivers.org/mining/>

2026 WITU Youth Camp is filled and ready to go

Preparations for the 2026 youth camp are falling into place. The camp is filled, and everything with the Pine Lake Bible Camp is locked down. We are in great shape with our adult and junior mentors, and my order for perfect weather has been placed.

A big thank you goes out to all the chapters that have sponsored students to attend the camp. As always, we will have a wide range of ages.

Our youth camp committee has been working hard restructuring the schedule to beef up and improve our fly-casting presentation, along with a couple of new presentations.

“A big thank you goes out to all the chapters that have sponsored students to attend the camp.”
Linn Beck

and Waupaca.

Also, we will continue working with the DNR on fishing accessibility for our groups when they go out fishing on Sunday for their fish-along.

The camp is August 13-16 at the Pine Lake Bible Camp between Wild Rose

Items needed for the camp

Every year we hold drawings and give away items to the students. Usually, the items we give away have been donated by individuals or chapters. We are looking for gently used gear. I do have some used rods, so we are looking for any items that you are not using that could be put to good use by our campers. If anyone has things they would like to donate to the camp, please reach out.

Youth Camp committee members needed

We are still in search of some WITU members to join us on the youth camp committee to ensure the camp succeeds into the future.

The committee is responsible for planning the curriculum, as well as recruiting and scheduling adult mentors, along with registering the campers.

If you have a passion for working with young people and want to make a difference, please consider joining us and help keep the tradition of the WITU Youth Camp alive.

If anyone is interested in joining the committee or has any donations for the camp, please contact me by email at chlbeck@att.net or 920-216-7408.

—Linn Beck,
WITU Youth Camp Coordinator.

Floodplain regulations can create hidden obstacles

Sometimes regulations that protect floodplains can complicate stream restoration projects.

By Scott Allen, TU Great Lakes Stream Restoration Engineer

In the early 1900s, disasters like the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 wreaked havoc throughout the United States. In 1968, the National Flood Insurance Act created nationwide floodplain regulations to manage the skyrocketing costs of flood losses and protect vulnerable floodplains from development. In 2024, floodplain regulations almost prevented a valuable trout stream habitat project in Wisconsin. Trout Unlimited is now advocating for common-sense approaches to floodplain regulations to help good conservation projects get built.

Prime example

The East Branch of the Eau Claire River is a Class I trout stream with a population of naturally reproducing native brook trout. The river flows southerly through Langlade County just west of the City of Antigo.

Where the river flows through Mills Recreation Area, a 26-acre, undeveloped property owned by the county, the channel is wide, shallow and devoid of habitat due to historic logging and agricultural practices.

Working with the county, local DNR Fisheries Biologist Taylor Curran designed an in-stream habitat restoration project consisting of brushing, tree planting, channel shaping, point bar/island construction and the installation of complex wood and rock habitat. Taylor conducted fish surveys, documented his design, secured funding and was ready to construct the project in 2024. But there was one problem.

The project site lies in a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Zone A floodplain. To stay in FEMA's good graces, regulators determined that a hydrology and hydraulics (H&H) study was required to evaluate how this project would affect water surface elevations during the 1% annual exceedance probability (AEP) flood.

Taylor didn't have the licensure to perform the study, nor the budget to hire a consultant, so despite the fact his project was supported by everyone involved, it was halted. Unfortunately, it's becoming commonplace for floodplain regulations to have this inadvertent effect.

Fortunately, TU's Great Lakes program could help get this project across the finish line. Working with Taylor, we completed a topographic survey of the project site, calculated hydrology for the design flow, and created a hydraulic model to estimate water surface elevations. Comparing the existing conditions to proposed conditions shows how the habitat project impacts the floodplain regulations. The end result was authorization to construct about 95 percent of what was designed. This was a huge success for a

project that had been completely stopped.

Regulations needed

Floodplain regulations are important. They save lives and money by managing development risk and they protect watersheds by preserving natural areas that store floodwaters, reduce erosion and filter pollutants. They generally prevent, in practice if not explicitly, any increase in water surface elevation ('no rise'), which is nice if the goal is to protect a nearby house from flooding. But when applied to stream restoration projects, floodplain regulations can have unintended consequences. Since some restoration projects have the potential to raise water surface elevations, and we usually have very little funding to work with, requiring a sophisticated engineering analysis to show a 'no rise' can spell doom.

Advocating for federal changes

TU is advocating to reduce some of the unnecessary burdens of floodplain regulations. At the state level, we're working with agencies to bring consistency to regulatory interpretation, 'right-size' any necessary analysis, taking the risk to nearby structures into consideration, and leveraging exemptions for minor projects. Nationally, we're advocating for the bipartisan Floodplain Enhancement and Recovery Act (FERA) which aims to cut bu-



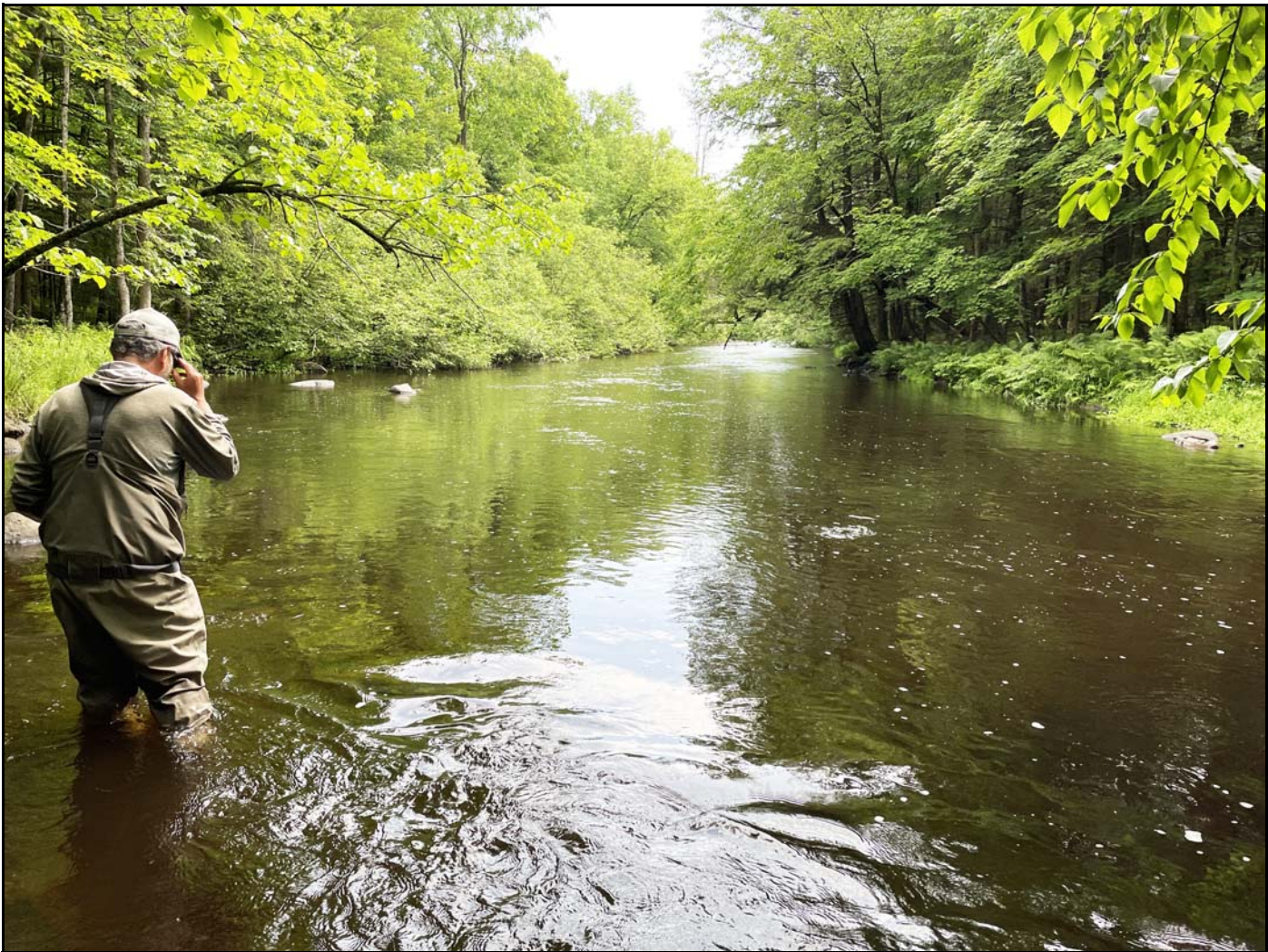
EAST BRANCH OF THE EAU CLAIRE RIVER HABITAT PROJECT SITE

reaucratic red tape at FEMA and streamline restoration projects.

You can help. As a chapter, talk with your local DNR fisheries staff about any floodplain regulation issues they're experiencing and, if possible, offer to contribute funding to permitting efforts so high quality habitat projects can be built. As a TU member or supporter, you can advocate for policies that make it easier to do restoration projects. Call your state legislators and ask for an increase in the Inland Trout Stamp, as the Wisconsin TU state

council has long advocated. Contact your members of Congress and ask them to support the FERA legislation, and for those in Rep. Bryan Steil's district, thank him for being a co-sponsor.

Taylor's East Branch Eau Claire project got waylaid late in the game. Many other projects, however, are quietly discarded before getting off the ground due to floodplain regulations. We're hopeful that some improvements in the regulatory environment, both locally and nationally, can help make sure good,



EAST BRANCH OF THE EAU CLAIRE RIVER IS OFTEN WIDE, SHALLOW AND LACKING HABITAT

Donate to Wisconsin TU via Thrivent Lutheran Financial

If you are a TU member and have investments with Thrivent Lutheran Financial, you may have the ability to make charitable donations to groups of your choosing through Thrivent Financial's Thrivent Choice program.

The Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited is now a listed entity within the Thrivent Choice program. If you are a Thrivent member and have the ability to make Thrivent Choice donations, we would

be honored if you'd consider including the Wisconsin Council of TU within your charitable planning, and making a donation to our cause.

Teaching Me a Master Class

Instructor: Wayne Lundeen

By Leo Tramm

When I met my wife, Karen, in the early 1990s, my fishing experience at that point consisted of distant childhood memories of drowning worms—a term I hope doesn’t offend the purists, as I’ve learned that the business of bait is not to be taken lightly—a concept that I find both baffling and mildly charming. I hadn’t so much as looked at a fly rod, but after a few holiday dinners featuring smoked steelhead and the kind of romanticizing stories told from the head of the table, I realized I’d married into a dynasty. Karen’s grandfather, Wayne “Pa” Lundeen, was a legendary angler and a fixture of the lower Bois Brule.

He was born in 1908 on the banks of the Sandy River in Minnesota. He grew up in a two-room house on 55 acres of Weyerhaeuser cutover land -- the kind of place that teaches a boy exactly how the world works.

Two streams crossed the homestead, and when the ice went out in the spring, the northern pike and bullheads would start their run. Wayne, displaying a Finnish practicality that occasionally sidestepped the letter of the law, would dam up a hairpin turn in the creek to create a natural holding tank. When his mother wanted fish for dinner, he didn’t go to the store; he went to the backyard with a dip net.

By high school, he graduated to spearing fish during the spring run. It was illegal, of course, but the local

hardware stores sold the spears right next to the hammers and nails. It’s hard to blame a kid for falling into temptation when the tools of the trade are standard inventory.

Off to the city

Wayne eventually headed for Minneapolis to study engineering, then teaching—the faster path to a foothold in the world. His memoir, *Tales from an Old Finn*, reads like an early history of life in the upper Midwest. He worked in lumber camps and construction, farmed turkeys, drove trucks, and eventually managed the Grain and Warehouse Commission in Superior, Wisconsin. But through every job, teaching being his passion, and every decade, fishing remained the one constant, as did his habit of occasionally landing on the wrong side of a game warden’s badge.

Take the trip to Finland, Minnesota, after his freshman year of college. He and his friend Alvin Pringle headed north with nothing but hooks, sinkers and a map. They didn’t have the fine, split-cane bamboo rods of the Eastern elite—the Leonards or Paynes that cost more than several month’s wages. They did what any sensible woodsman would do: they cut cedar or willow poles right there on the bank, rigged their line to the tip, and went to work.

They found a pool under a waterfall and pulled out dozens of beautiful brook trout. They were sitting by the fire, enjoying a gourmet trout breakfast, when three men pulled

up and identified themselves as game wardens. Turns out, the season was closed.

In court in Two Harbors, the judge looked at the thirty fish laid out like evidence in a murder trial. He told them the fine was ten dollars a fish—three hundred dollars total—or thirty days at the work farm. Seeing two broke college kids, the judge softened, noting the DNR signs hadn’t been updated. He dropped the fine to two dollars each. Wayne and Alvin, with straight faces, told the judge they didn’t have the money but would pay just as soon as they found work. The judge let them go. The statute of limitations has long since passed, and both men went to their graves without ever being “rich enough” to settle the debt.

Wayne married Alma in 1930, and they had three kids. His daughter, Peggy—my mother-in-law and an accomplished poet—wrote about a trip they took when she was in her twenties, reeling from an “emotional disaster.” They fished in the kind of shared silence that only fathers and daughters can manage. By noon, the heartbreak had been replaced by a quiet calm. As she put it, sometimes you come home with a catch far more valuable than fish.

Wayne moved to Brule in 1940 to run the Co-op. He’d been disqualified from the war—a 4-F status due to a childhood wood-chopping accident that cost him the sight in his right eye. He carried a bit of remorse for not serving, but he made up for it by becoming a pillar of the community and, more importantly, a master of the river.

Nylon spawn bags were Wayne’s secret weapons

In his Brule years, Wayne was a weekend lone wolf, mostly because there weren’t many other souls around who

The Pro

Ninety seven,
he needed a cane to walk,
also someone to paddle
so he could concentrate on fishing.
Leo offered to take
him to Lake Superior
to fish from the shore,
not wanting to chance a canoe.
Drove to get bait,
Pa having determined
from years of experience,
it was a leech kind of day.

At the lake,
settled into a lawn chair
between other hopefuls
lining the bank,
Pa, from years of experience,
decided it was actually
a Rapala kind of day,
and changed bait.
His first cast bent
the rod way over,
convincing sign
he might already be stuck
in the weeds.

His walleye was twenty-eight inches.
Every angler in sight
came to interview,
inspect, and glean advice
as Pa held court all morning
from his folding throne
at the Mouth of the Brule.

~ Peggy Trojan
PA copyright ©2021

No Fish Hole

At a turn in the Brule known as No Fish Hole, an elderly angler steps into the river with the help of a handmade wading staff. He is friendly and talkative as if he knows you. He doesn’t. But when you are steelheading, you are automatically a member of the brotherhood.

He lives near the river, he says. Been fishing the Brule for more than 40 years. He left for a time, had a job in Chicago, but he returned. He couldn’t stay away, he says.

While he talked he casually drifted a spawn bag through the waters of No Fish Hole.

“It’s a little early for the best fishing. I like it when there’s snow flurries in the air. That separates the men from the boys,” he says before moving on.

Surely it does. But let the snow wait for now. Let time stand still for a moment as the leaves drift down to a river that is timeless. Let me wade once more to seek the steelhead.

Let me remain a boy before another year passes and the Brule sleeps under snow.

Excerpt from *Time and the Steelhead Won’t Stand Still for the Fishermen on the Brule*

Ron Schara
Minneapolis Star-Tribune
October 4, 1981



SHOWING OFF A BRACE OF BRULE RIVER STEELHEAD
Wayne (left) and his fishing pal, Ted Koski (right), with a brace of Brule River steelhead. A fine catch for a morning on the Brule.



THAT’S A WHOLE LOTTA LAKE TROUT
Wayne and grandsons circa mid-1970s with so many lake trout that has one of the grandsons scratching his head in awe!

understood the specific, quiet madness of the lower river. He’d head for the Brule to chase steelhead, wading the kind of holes you only find by putting in the miles. His secret weapon was a #3 hook dressed in a spawn bag made from his wife’s discarded nylons—the ones with runs in them, or so we’d like to hope for the sake of a peaceful marriage.

He drifted those bags along the bottom and caught fish until his arms ached. These steelhead ranged from seven-pound “smalls” to “slabs” well over 10 pounds, with enough brown trout bycatch to fill a pantry. Eventually, he bought a pressure cooker and took to canning the surplus. He’d brag about the sandwiches and fish loaf, but if you really wanted to see him smile,

you’d watch him coat a fresh fillet in Hellmann’s and cayenne and broil it just until the translucence gave way to a perfect, flaky opaque.

Wayne was the kind of angler who became part of the landscape. In 1981, Ron Schara wrote a piece for the Tribune about a mysterious elderly fisherman on the Brule. When the clippings started showing up in Wayne’s mailbox, his daughter Peggy scribbled on one: “This has to be you, Pa!!”

The solo act ended when he teamed up with Ted Koski. As the years thinned their blood and the cold, fast water of the lower river got a bit too pushy for wading, they took to a canoe. They’d pull out of the driveway at 4:30 a.m. in the biting chill of November, paddling up-

stream to the fast water.

Wayne’s ace in the hole then was a No. 7 black-and-silver Flatfish. He’d catch fish when everyone else was just washing their lures, and he wasn’t above a little humble bragging about it. When the river froze or the season turned, they’d just move their operations out onto Lake Superior for lake trout.

He fished with the whole clan—daughter, sons, son-in-law, and grandchildren—traveling from the Gunflint to Alaska to a disastrously ill-fated trip in Ontario. The stories from those trips usually involved gourmet shore lunches, Manhattans chilled with lake ice, and at least one encounter with a “stark-naked lady” in Finland, Minnesota, that shall remain, as they say, not fit for conversation.

A lesson learned late

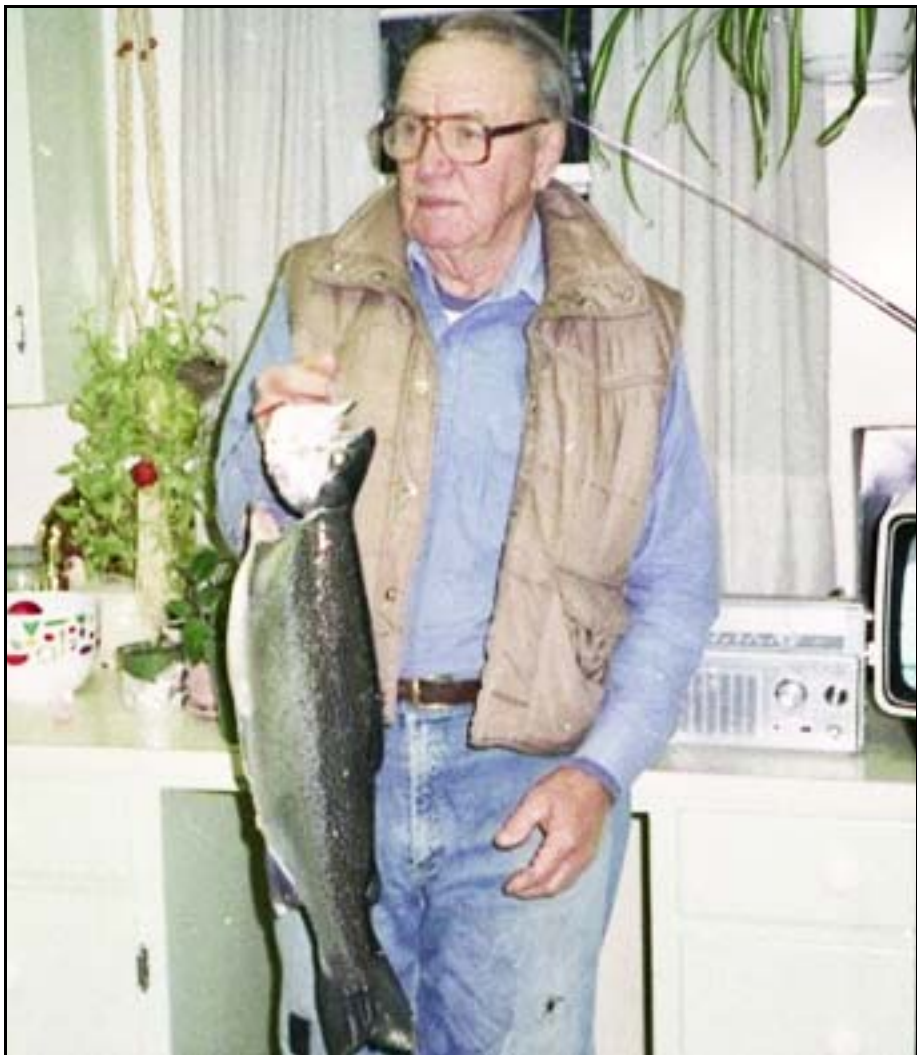
By the time I was available to fish with Wayne, he was 97 and had outlived his fishing pals. Yet he couldn’t resist the drawing of the water and wanted me to paddle him up the Brule in a canoe. I didn’t do it. I regret that. Some lessons don’t announce themselves until it’s too late to retake the class.

Still, Peggy managed to salvage something from the outing, in her poem “The Pro.” In those lines, she caught the grace of the man and the sharp, stinging clarity of the lesson I learned too late. It’s a fine piece of writing, though I’d still trade the poem for another afternoon on the paddle, watching an old man enjoy the river – his river!

Wayne would teach me about water, loyalty, commitment and the long education that comes from doing something simply because you love it.

I suspect Wayne’s heart really lived on the artesian creek that cut through his own land. He’d find a fallen first-growth pine, sit himself down, and light a cigarette. He’d watch the brookies rise and wonder about the loggers who’d left that tree behind a century ago. It was a place for the kind of “serious thinking” that only happens when you’re listening to bird songs and flowing water, realizing that a good life, much like a good drift, is mostly about being in the right place at the right time.

After Wayne died, I inherited a



A NO. 7 BLACK AND SILVER FLATFISH BECAME HIS ACE IN THE HOLE
It was a favorite lure when he was in his later years. He’d catch fish when everyone else was just washing their lures, and he wasn’t above a little humble bragging about it. When the river froze or the season turned, they’d just move their operations out onto Lake Superior for lake trout.

Fishing Lesson

One morning, in my early twenties and suffering an emotional disaster, my father invited me to go fishing.

He rowed us to the middle of the lake and baited our hooks. He did not say "I told you so", or utter advice.

Without a word, he offered me, a secret smoker, a cigarette.

We floated and fished in silence. By noon, my anger and sadness had slithered into the water and lake calm had taken its place.

I learned, on a good day, with luck, one can come home with a catch more valuable than fish.

~ Peggy Trojan
PA copyright ©2021

few of his bamboo rods, maybe remnants from the “barrel” of rods and rod tips at the Co-op, likely kept for the elite of the upper Brule. Some of the rods looked as if they’d never been used. I fish them now, carefully, with flies instead of worms, though I suspect Wayne would have considered this a minor stylistic choice rather than a moral one.

I still haven’t caught a steelhead on the Brule. Maybe I never will. That’s the thing about fishing. You never really graduate, rather you keep showing up hoping there is an instructor nearby, quietly shaking their head and smiling as you do it wrong all over again.

Eventually, I hope this all gels into a book—a collection of stories about the various anglers I’ve shared a boat or shore with and the things they’ve taught me about life, most of which I probably didn’t realize I was learning at the time.

This particular chapter will be the only one where I will include full names and point to specific spots on the map; the rest, out of a sense of misplaced loyalty or perhaps just to protect the innocent, will remain a bit more mysterious.

Inspiration for the title

The title, Teaching Me a Master Class, came to me during a float with a guide named Taylor. He was rowing my friend Rich and me through a stretch of river where a rocky outcropping created a perfect back eddy—the kind of spot where fish like to sit and wait for the world to come to them.

Taylor had the oars dialed in. He’d swing us through that bend, and on every single pass, Rich and I would double up. It was a rhythmic, almost ridiculous display of competence: cast, hook, net, repeat. By our fourth pass, we were both connected to a pair of bright, stubborn rainbows when an angler in a boat holding in the eddy watching us the whole time, shook his head, and hollered, “They’re teaching us a master class!”

I suppose that’s the goal of any decent life on the water—to finally reach a point where you look like you know what you’re doing, even if, deep down, you’re just as surprised as the fish are.

Great Lakes Program update: Summer 2026

We're working on our first culvert replacement project on the Little Bois Brule River in Douglas County. This project is located less than a mile from the Bois Brule River.

By Chris Collier,
Great Lakes Program Manager

Our project season started off fast this year with four volunteer events. In early May we partnered with the DNR and the Wild Rivers Chapter to host a tree-planting event on the White River in Bayfield County, and then again partnered with Wild Rivers, Friends of the Lincoln Community Forest and Landmark Conservancy for another tree planting on the Marengo River.

We also partnered with TU CARES to host the second annual Mekan River Watershed Celebration. We had an excellent turnout, including my oldest son's first TU event. In early June we partnered with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest for a tree-planting event on a tributary to the Border Brule. Thanks to all our partners for their help pulling this work together.

Little Bois Brule project

Our fish passage and stream restoration work us now underway for the season. In late May our contractor began prepping our first culvert replacement project on the Little Bois Brule River in Douglas County. This project is located less than a mile from the Bois Brule River. This project will have major benefits for both in-stream and lake-run trout popula-

tions. Coming later this summer will be a crossing replacement on a tributary to Brule Creek and a failed logging dam removal on Brule Creek, both located in Forest County. Finally, we are providing cost-sharing for five crossing replacements on Wisconsin Creek in Florence County that will be constructed by the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

Several of these projects have been more than three years in the making. A huge thank you is due to our funders, including Bell's Brewing, TC Energy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Fish Passage Program, the U.S. Forest Service, We Energies Mitigation and Enhancement Fund, Fund for Lake Michigan, Wisconsin DNR, Caerus Foundation, and contributions from the Wisconsin Council's northern region chapters and the council itself.

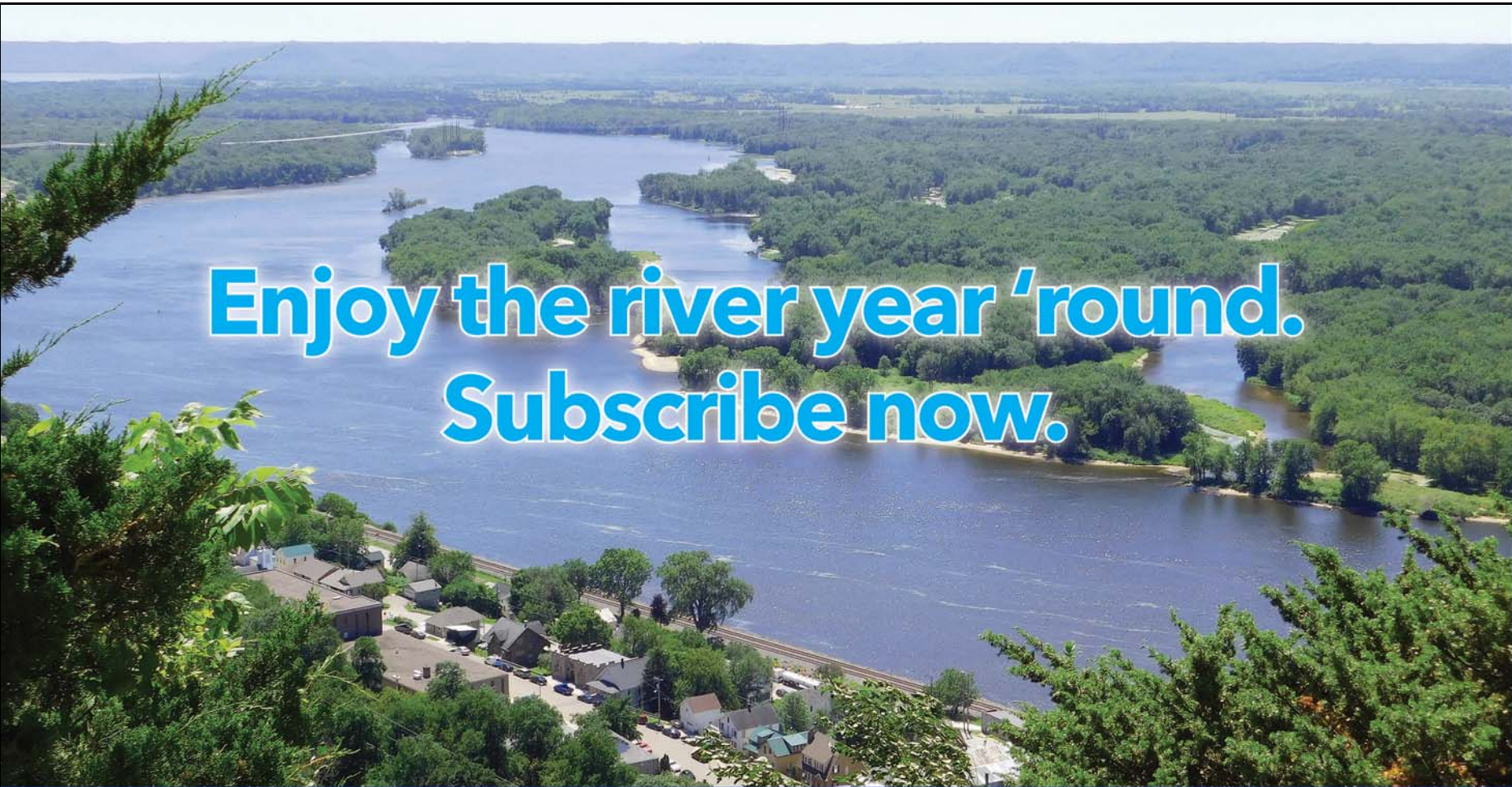
I'd also like to shout out our team members Scott, Danielle and Katti for making these projects happen.

If you want to get out and see a project site, please contact me at chris.collier@tu.org and we'll get something scheduled.

Thank you all for your support and please feel free to reach out to me at chris.collier@tu.org if you want to learn more or see any projects.



THE LITTLE ONES ARE ALWAYS AMAZED BY THE LITTLE CRITTERS
Max Collier gets his first exposure to aquatic macro-invertebrate sampling. The dragonfly larvae and golden stones were his favorite.



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Tackling a monster

Piecing together diverse funding sources to address a culvert 'monstrosity.'

By Mark Taylor, TU Eastern Communications Director

There are several sound approaches to replacing a poorly functioning, undersized, fish-blocking culvert. The first step is to remove the old structure.

Sometimes nature gives TU and others who frequently tackle that kind of work a headstart, with flood waters blowing out roads and starting the demolition process.

When high flows again damaged a multi-culvert crossing on Crossett Creek in northern Wisconsin, there was a chance to start from scratch.

"My team identified the location in 2020," said TU Great Lakes Program Manager Chris Collier, "At the time it had three culverts and actively failing."

But fully replacing culverts takes planning and time — luxuries not always available when there is urgency to repair a damaged, busy road. Full replacements are also not inexpensive, and those costs can be especially difficult for rural localities with limited budgets to absorb.

That means that towns and counties responsible for problematic crossings sometimes try more immediate, budget-friendly fixes rather than outright replacements.

In the case of the Crossett Creek project, that meant trying to account for high flows by adding two additional culverts.

"It was now a five-culvert monstrosity," Collier said. "And it still failed the next year, and the year after that."

Collier, along with Florence County and the town of Aurora, got to work on a permanent solution, one of many that TU has undertaken in the county recently honored as a Trout Unlimited Conservation Town.

"It was probably the worst culvert we've ever repaired," Collier said. "But we were able to collaborate and get it done."

The project not only gave the creek plenty of room to flow, protecting the road above, but also reconnected miles of coldwater habitat by allowing trout and other stream dwellers to move freely both upstream and downstream.

Crossett Creek is a tributary of the Menominee River. During the heat of summer the river can get too



warm for trout, so Crossett Creek's cooler waters provide crucial cold water refugia. There's a lake in the upper part of the system that also holds trout.

"It's the same kind of problem we see across the state," Collier said. "You've got these tributaries that might not be the most fishable water, but they are really important for spawning and coldwater refuge, and fish from the larger rivers can't get into them."

"We're depressing trout numbers in the fishable water because the fish can't get into these tributaries."

The project on Crossett Creek cost a total of \$180,000.

Pooling resources

Funding came from a variety of sources, including the town of Aurora, the Florence County Land Conservation Department, a Fish and Wildlife Service Fish Passage Grant, the Fund for Lake Michigan, a foundation that supports TU's work in the region, and a grant from TC Energy.

"It was a really good example of pulling together several modest pots of funding to make it happen," Collier said. "And in the new culvert's first spring it was able to withstand another major flood and keep the road open."



ADDING MORE PIPES DIDN'T SOLVE THEIR PROBLEM

Budget-strapped towns and counties that are responsible for problematic crossings will sometimes try more immediate, budget-friendly fixes. In this case they were trying to account for high flows by adding two additional culverts. It still failed.



THE NEW CULVERT EASILY HANDLED SPRING'S HIGH FLOWS



COLD TRIBUTARY WATERS ARE ONCE AGAIN REACHABLE

Crossett Creek is a tributary of the Menominee River and a coldwater refugia for trout and other fish species during the heat of summer.



A PROJECT SO AMAZING THAT THEY OFFER TOURS

TC Energy contributed financially to this project, and members of their team toured the finished Crossett Creek crossing project this spring along with Scott Allen and Danielle Nelson.



Chapter News

Aldo Leopold Chapter

The Aldo Leopold Chapter of Trout Unlimited recently hosted its annual summer picnic at Habermann Park in Lodi.

The picnic featured wonderful prizes for the grand prize raffle and the bucket raffles. We appreciate all of our supporters, volunteers and sponsors. The picnic also featured a timely presentation about AI data centers by Hannah Richardson of Clean Wisconsin. This is a relevant topic because Meta, the parent company of Facebook, is building a large data center within our chapter's territory in Columbia County.

This fascinating and eye-opening presentation is summarized in our summer issue of the Alder Fork Journal at the QR Code or simple-booklet.com/alderforkjournal/summer2026

Our members are staying busy this summer helping at the Wisconsin Women's Flyfishing Clinics, the Wisconsin Council Youth Camp and

Reel Recovery. Chapter President Dan Endres is selling TU Brew, a specially blended and roasted coffee, at Meyer Oak Grove Market on Saturday mornings in Sauk City. Each one-pound bag sold directly benefits our chapter and mission.

—Matthew Duffy



Antigo Chapter

We wish a happy summer to all. In June we had a great Kid's Fishing Day at Antigo City Park. We were blessed with beautiful weather and a great turnout. We almost ran out of food. This year we had four bikes to give away. All the kids caught some nice trout and enjoyed the various prizes. The Antigo DNR crew offered a casting contest. We can't say thank you enough to everyone in

the Antigo area for their continued support to make this day happen.

On June 20 we held a work day on the Evergreen River near White Lake with other TU chapters from the surrounding region. We helped the DNR get some stream brush bundling done. Our chapter provided lunch for the work crew.

Also in June we placed a new dock at Garski flowage. This dock



THE ANTIGO CHAPTER SURE MADE THIS GIRL'S DAY SPECIAL



AN ANTIGO-AREA YOUNGSTER WITH HIS NEW RIDE

replaced one that was removed a couple of years ago. Again thanks to our members who help with these worthwhile projects.

We continue to maintain our waste fishing line boxes, and we painted the fishing dock railing at

the access at Highways 45 and C. We hope to add some wood chips at the Riverview Road access to the E. Branch of the Eau Claire River.

—Scott Henricks

Blackhawk Chapter

In April our members manned a booth at the local Milton Fishing Club swap meet and tackle sale. This organization does habitat work on local lakes, building fish cribs and helping maintain accessible fishing locations. We had a table tying flies and giving out information about TU and our banquet. Milton High School has a fishing club. Parents and other volunteers take students all over the Midwest to attend fishing tournaments. We hope to be able to introduce the kids to fly fishing and the conservation opportunities on local streams.

Our annual banquet at Boundaries Bar and Grill was a success, even though attendance was lower than anticipated. Quite a few members brought in items for raffle buckets and the silent auction. A huge boost was provided through donations from the family of chapter founding member Don Studt, who passed away a year ago.

Don would have been proud. As our treasurer for years, he was always the ramrod for our annual banquet. We held a special raffle for the Milton High School Fishing Club to help defer the many expenses of taking the kids to tournaments.

Members Dave Sands, Terry

Vaughn and Dave Brethauer attended the annual Youth Outdoor Expo at the DNR's McKenzie Center. Fly tyers organized by Bob Haase tie mop flies for busloads of kids. It is a terrific event and we love going to spread the word of TU and spark outdoor enthusiasm in the kids.

Our May meeting had a presentation on Driftless Area fishing by guide Dale Ostoff. He and his dad Rich have guided in the Driftless Area for a very long time. Rich has done presentations for the chapter in past years, and it was great to have Dale visit us here to provide his insights.

Our Wednesday fly-tying sessions at the DNR service center continue, providing flies for our monthly raffles and other events. It has had the added benefit of bringing awareness of Trout Unlimited to many people who come to the DNR service center. Some have returned to learn how to tie flies and we have had a few new faces at monthly meetings. It's just another way to connect with people and spread the word. Now it's time to get out fishing and use some of the flies we spent all winter tying.

—Dave Brethauer

Central Wisconsin Chapter

Our annual Troutfest event at the Mount Morris Camp and Retreat Center was filled with education, socialization, fly tying, vendors and used equipment sales and raffles. About 240 people attended. Thank you to Tom Meyer and the committee members who made the event successful.

The Central Sands Trout River Series coordinated by Tom Bishop was very successful and well attended. The events focused on different

ivers of central Wisconsin and provided insight on river ecology, access points, effective fly-fishing techniques and fly tying. The four events highlighted the Mekan River, Pine River, Waupaca/Tomorrow River and the White River. The events occurred at multiple locations including Ripon, PoySippi and Amherst.

We held the Dan Harmon III Fly Fishing School at the Amherst Bible Camp located on the Tomorrow



CWTU'S DHIII TROUT FISHING SCHOOL STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS



CWTU MEMBERS MONITORING THE PINE RIVER

John Tucker, Tanja and Adam Zins and Rodger Surprise monitoring the Pine River at Aniwa Road.

Chapter News



THREE CHAPTERS AND TUCARES HOLD JOINT WORK DAY

CWTU May 2026 work day with the Elliott Donnelley and Fox Valley chapters and TUCARES attendees.



PLANTING TREES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION AT JOINT EVENT

There was a great turnout with 88 people attending. Elliott Donnelley Chapter members attended and presented us with a generous donation toward our stream restoration projects in the Central Sands area.

River. As always, this year's class was full, with 24 attendees and many helpful educators. Guides took their students fishing on day two, and had plenty of excitement. The weather was good and there was a hex hatch at night. Tracy Moran is the program coordinator. If you are interested in the 2027 program, contact Joe Peikert for more information.

We hosted The TUCARES Environmental Celebration at its May work day on the Mekan River.

There was a great turnout with 88 people attending. Elliott Donnelley Chapter members attended and presented us with a generous donation toward our stream restoration projects in the Central Sands area.

They have been supporting CWTU for more than 23 years and help at our May work day annually. We are very appreciative of their friendship and continued support. Representatives from Pheasants Forever, The Ice Age Trail, county representatives, local home owners and other environmental groups were also present at the May work day.

Member Mike Northam and the DNR's Shawn Sullivan organize our work days, which are typically on the third Saturday from May through September.

The DNR Trout Habitat team works with us in improving trout habitat. Shawn Sullivan is Operations Team Manager with the fisheries department of the DNR. The DNR staff volunteer to work with us on work day Saturdays without pay. Al Sanders frequently plays the violin shoreside.

Upcoming work days are July 18 at Davies Creek, August 15 at Davies Creek and September 19 at the DNR Wild Rose facility.

Our River Keeper program cur-

rently has 104 river keepers monitoring 34 streams, and we now have more than 20 years of data. Bob Jozwowski does a great job in making this happen.

The DNR will have their redd educational program in October. Our chapter, along with the Fox Valley Chapter, supports the DNR with members being educated to participate in recording the redd survey.

This year for our party/fundraiser we are honoring the Wisconsin DNR Wild Rose Trout Habitat Management Crew. The event will be held at the World War II Memorial in Wautoma on September 19. All are welcome to attend.

We've had some great informational programs following our board meetings.

For Tip's Night in April, Bob Haase shared some of his fly-tying and fly-fishing tips. He asked everyone to share their favorite tips.

In May Steve Nelson detailed his Trout Routes app. June featured a picnic and fly casting and fishing at Tom Bishop's home on Lake Poygan.

Coming up is our August 12 picnic and river float, with casting and fishing at the Tuckers on the Pine River.

We are currently planning our programs for the fall and winter. If you are interested in being a speaker, contact Laura Tucker at lbtucker1953@gmail.com.

Our chapter's success comes from our members, and we are grateful for all your support to keep your Central Wisconsin Chapter great.

—Laura Tucker

Coulee Region Chapter

We had a very nice Spring here in the Driftless Area and have been prepping for the summer event season, with activities from May through August. Our event season started in May with a wonderful collaborative event with the Coon Creek Community Watershed Council as they celebrate their Coon Creek Confluence.

The Driftless Angler Drive-In Fly Fishing Show in early June created plenty of excitement, as did TroutFest in mid-June. The Youth Outdoor Fest is in July, and we'll finish up with StreamGIRLS in August. All these activities provide a great opportunity to get involved in chapter activities, and volunteers are always welcomed.

Our Member Engagement Event in March featured Ben Lubchansky whose day job is cooking and running the 608 Community Supported Kitchen and ties flies for the Driftless Angler and other shops as well as on Etsy for his site: Two Wicks Flies by night. Ben talked to us about handling and utilizing the (brown) trout you decide to keep. It was a very engaging and interesting discussion about many ways to utilize your catch.

Our last Member Engagement Event speaker was author Bob Trev-

is, the author of Trout Fishing the Driftless Area – A Troutchaser's Guide to Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa Trout Streams. Bob offered suggestions for what to do when you arrive at your favorite trout stream and there's no available parking at the access point. Bob is a retired fly-fishing guide, life member of FFI and long-time TU member. We enjoyed the presentation and took advantage of picking up a copy of his book to prepare for fishing season.

Again in April, we spent some time at Westby High School working with the Adventure Education class. We made it out to Logan Middle School for a general trout presentation, and Logan High School for their Outdoor Literature Class. This event is a favorite of our volunteers as it gives us the opportunity to enhance the story of "A River Runs Through It" by Norman Maclean by putting fly rods in the hands of the readers.

We kicked off May with our partners at Coon Creek Community Watershed Council (CCCWC) and their celebration: Coon Creek Confluence. We again assisted with giving away fishing rods to kids. We distributed more than 60 rods, along with a swag bag of hooks, bobbers, sinkers and an invitation to try out



PIT-TAGGING TROUT

UW-LaCrosse students tagging brook trout in Pammel Creek.



COULEE REGION CHAPTER MEMBERS MADE SPINNERS AT CONFLUENCE

The kids were fascinated at how spinning lures are made.



Chapter News



NEW KINGFISHER VISES

The kids enjoyed tying with our new vise.

their new rod at TroutFest. Coon Creek Confluence celebrates watershed conservation, and it was rewarding to see so many people connecting to the land and its streams at this event.

Our annual chapter picnic was held at a beautiful new venue – Second Nature at Reads Creek (SNRC) near Readstown. SNRC is a generous member of the community and provided us with a beautiful dining area, mowed casting area, and access to Reads Creek just steps away.

Thank you to Second Nature for their gracious hospitality. The event also featured a preview of the Sage rods in our CRTU Sage Rod Auction. The chapter received a donation of some vintage, hard-to-find, and oldie-but-goodie Sage rods in excellent condition to be used for fundraising. Proceeds will be used to fund chapter projects, education and more. It was a perfect Driftless evening, with a delicious picnic feast from Kathy's Country Cooking. Thank you to Joseph Meyer and Erik Helm for assisting with the rod casting and interpretation of the rods.

Our chapter was again invited back to Norskedalen during the time they host various groups of students from the local area to get outside and learn about nature. CRTU provides chapter members to get out in the water and kick up some bugs for a stream entomology session. Thank you to Brad Berger for volunteering for the event. We always have a great time and the kids love being outside.

We were also part of the first ever camp-out event for State Road Elementary in May. The 5th graders learned to tie knots and cast a spin rod before their overnight campout.

The next morning our volunteers met the students at Chad Erickson Park to put their skills to the test to catch fish.

Thank you to Pam Van Erem, Steve Miller, John Newton, Jan Kasperbauer, Paul and Cindy Halter, and James March for volunteering to make the campout event a success.

The last weekend in May, we were at the inaugural Goose Island Bank Fishing Classic in La Crosse. We tied flies with our new vise donated by Kingfisher Fly Shop in Missoula, Montana and talked trout with youth of all ages. There were prizes and other activities as well. This event was organized by the La Crosse Parks Department, La

Crosse Facilities Department and Goose Island Campground.

Ongoing events throughout the summer include our fly-tying gathering at 608 Brewing on the second Wednesday of the month. We are continuing through the summer to help keep the momentum up and participants engaged. In addition to the fly tying, Steve Miller, one of our FFI-certified casting instructors, is again offering a free casting clinic on French Island in La Crosse. Steve offers free classes on the second, third and fourth Wednesday evenings in June.

Our project work on Pammel Creek has begun with the PIT tagging of fish to be tracked during the restoration work and after its completion. We will track trout growth and travel distances.

The restoration project will remove the cultural sediment and allow the stream better access to the floodplain. The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse biology students are getting real life experiences with this project which was partially funded by a donation to ORA Trails from our chapter through a Friends of Wisconsin TU grant.

We have deployed our temperature loggers again this year. Temperature data is always important to the health of the fisheries in the Driftless Area. Hopefully, we have better markers this year and all our loggers can be located.

Thanks to all the logger sponsors and special thanks to Tenkara Angler, which also published a piece about the loggers in their publication.

You can see the data from previous years on our website at couleeregiontu.org. Also, check out our blog for more "trouty" information. We are re-publishing articles from The Scientific Angler, along with new content.

Youth Outdoor Fest is July 11 in La Crosse at Pettibone Park, and StreamGIRLS is August 8 at West Fork Sports Club in Avalanche. Volunteers make our events successful, and we have many activities planned at these events that could use your help. We would enjoy having you join us.

—Deb Muresan

Fox Valley Chapter

Sadly, the beginning of this report starts at an end. We recently lost one of the founders of our chapter. John Hammond brought life to Fox Valley Trout Unlimited as a founding member, then for more than 50 years he nurtured the chapter. John knew just starting an organization was only a beginning. One of John's greatest passions was fly fishing for trout. When he had the opportunity to join a group dedicated to the care, repair and renewal of coldwater fisheries, John was at the front.

He nurtured our young chapter with a high standard for its goals and understood the new chapter would grow only with the efforts of selfless volunteers. John even recognized early marketing for the chapter by giving a small box of trout flies to the new pastor of his church. He realized then, new members can come from anywhere.

The day before our 50th Anniversary banquet, John started a very long day at 4 a.m. with an Honor Flight to Washington for his service as a fighter pilot in Korea. Even after the long late night flight the day before, John arrived at our anniversary banquet to address and inspire our guests. His dedication to Trout Unlimited provides today's members with an ideal to live by.

This year's April Angling Adventure reminded us that spring in the Driftless Area always brings a little bit of everything, including challenging conditions, good fishing and

even better camaraderie. Members from the Fox Valley, Central Wisconsin and Fred Waara chapters gathered in the Driftless Area from April 16–19 for days of fishing and fellowship. Motivated anglers headed down as early as Sunday to squeeze in a little extra time on the water before a series of storms moved through the area early in the week that brought heavy rain and devastating hail.

Thursday night marked our April Fox Valley Chapter meeting at the West Fork Sports Club. Nick Voss, head guide at the Driftless Angler Fly Shop, shared excellent tips for fishing local Driftless streams and delivered an important reminder about springtime tick safety.

Saturday evening wrapped up with a potluck dinner and campfire at Esofea County Park. Thank you to everyone who brought food to share and helped make it such a great night. Congratulations to Randy Schultz, who earned the Traveling Angling Adventure Trophy after catching the most trout on Saturday.

Fox Valley Trout Unlimited (FV-TU) will once again partner with the Central Wisconsin Chapter this year on stream restoration and habitat improvement projects. Led by Shawn Sullivan and the Wisconsin DNR Wild Rose Trout Habitat Management Team, these workdays unfold on the third Saturday of each month from May through September.

The season's first project was in



RANDY SCHULTZ RECEIVED FVTU'S ANGLING ADVENTURE TROPHY



BRETT AND CODY HORAK AT A HIGH SCHOOL COMPETITION

John Barkmeier

Mark Hoffman

Chapter News



May on the Mekan River, as part of the Central Sands Celebration. In recent years, volunteers have restored and improved stretches of the Mekan River, Davis Creek and the West Branch of the White River. Their work included clearing brush, stabilizing stream banks, installing current deflectors, placing rocks and brush bundles and planting trees to support and enhance trout habitat.

We thank all of you who took part in this year's sweepstakes. With the generosity of Scott Grady (bamboo rod), Al Johnson (landing net) and all who contributed flies, we were able to put together a package that raised almost \$2,500 for our stream projects this year. We would like to congratulate Mike Walters of Vaughn, Montana for his winning entry this year. Mike is excited and impressed with the workmanship of his prizes and is currently enjoying them on his home waters.

May 9 brought together special people for our 46th Annual Fishing Day for People with Disabilities at YMCA Camp Shioc. More than 60 people attended, including special anglers, their mentors and family members. Anglers caught and kept dozens of nice rainbow trout and practiced catch-and-release on the plentiful bass and panfish. After fishing, everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch including brats, burgers, hot dogs, sides, and desserts all prepared and served by chapter volunteers. Everyone who attended left with a big smile, a full belly and happy memories.

As a member of TU CARES we took part in the 2nd annual Central Sands Celebration on the Mekan River in May. This event showcases the partners by inviting the public to learn what TU and conservationists do for our environment. An open structure allowed old friends to catch up and new friends to connect during the weekend to better understand who we are as Trout Unlimited and local conservationists.

Friday evening brought people to the Richford community center. Guests had a chance to learn fly tying from local tyers. Later that evening Chris Firkus gave a presentation about recreation and conservation in the Central Sands region. Chris focused on the Mekan River and the newly approved watershed management plan. A prominent theme throughout the talk reminded guests of the plentiful public lands and rivers in the area are truly ours to enjoy, whether you're an angler, a birder, a kayaker or hiker. Go out and enjoy them.

Saturday morning began at 8 a.m. at the Mekan River. Shawn Sullivan divided volunteers into units. The DNR showed stream stocking to verify results of our efforts. Engaged folks enjoyed brushing, in-stream log placements, and tree planting throughout the morning. By late morning, teams returned for a spectacular lunch. Areas were set up for invertebrate identification, fly casting and engagement with our vendors such as Pheasants Forever and Ice Age Trail. Al Sanders again entertained us with his fiddle. We already received donated seed money to en-

sure an even more successful event next season. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped make the celebration a great event.

For us, trout fishing is a favorite entertainment. At the Outagamie County Fair in June we had the opportunity to share that passion with fairgoers. We offered casting lessons and competitions, fly tying and a display of aquatic life found in local streams, which was a favorite with the kids. Last year was our first time at the fair, and our exhibit was so well received that the Fair Association invited us back. Our exhibit works well because volunteers help fair goers of all ages learn about the fishing skills we value. Volunteers received a free season pass to the fair, including parking and admission.

Something interesting is happening around us. Across Wisconsin, and right here in our region, school districts offer extracurricular high school fishing teams or clubs. These teams are organized, coached and highly engaged. They meet regularly, practice together and compete in tournaments. For high school kids, these teams provide a sense of belonging and connection to the outdoors that traditional sports don't always offer. What if youth activities didn't compete with TU involvement, but became a pathway into it? Recently we started exploring a vision that connects youth engagement, family involvement and "firsthand" coldwater conservation.

We're exploring the idea of hosting a High School Fly Fishing Competition as a fun and engaging attraction for young anglers and their families. The competition could be pitched as an annual capstone event that high school teams could aim towards. This approach creates a natural onboard ramp for families into TU. By design, it isn't just about a single event. Engagement is fostered through structured progression, beginning with educating high school teams and extending to family involvement. Later we follow by encouraging participation in ongoing conservation initiatives such as habitat improvement workdays, water quality monitoring and redd surveys.

This idea is still taking shape and that's on purpose. If you're interested in helping, volunteering, sponsoring, partnering or simply offering feedback, FVTU would genuinely love to hear from you. Even a short note with your thoughts can help shape what this becomes. Cold water, wild trout and the next generation of stewards depend on thoughtful ideas and engaged people.

This year the Fox Valley Chapter is sponsoring two youths to attend the annual WITU Youth Camp. Our chapter asks for a short essay on why the applicant should attend the camp. Both Trevin Lapean and Isaac Romberg wrote about their desire to learn more about the trout stream environment, conservation and fishing skills. We thought these two young people would be amazing at this year's camp.

—Tony Pudlo

teers has stepped forward to help carry on the chapter's long tradition of conservation, education and caring for Central Wisconsin's coldwater resources.

We're excited about the energy, ideas and momentum this new team brings. As we look ahead, our goal is simple: Continue doing good work for our local streams while creating more opportunities for people to get involved, learn and connect with one another.

We're also looking forward to building relationships with other organizations, businesses and commu-

nity members who care about the same things we do. Whether it's conservation, outdoor recreation, education or simply a love for our local waters, we believe some of the best work happens when people come together around a shared purpose.

We're grateful for the foundation built by those who came before us and excited to see what we can accomplish together in the years ahead.

Contact us at frankhornberg-troutunlimited@gmail.com.

—Ted Conachen

Green Bay Chapter

Our April annual meeting featured a presentation by TU Great Lakes Program Manager Chris Collier on aquatic organism passage in northern Wisconsin trout streams. His presentation highlighted the importance of fish passage for trout populations and the challenges created by infrastructure such as dams and culverts.

Following the program, we held elections to fill vacant positions. The results were as follows: Board of Directors (two 3-year terms) – Jose Diaz and Doug Seidl; Brown County Conservation Alliance Representatives (three 1-year terms) – Bruce Duechert, Janet Smith, and Dave Purnell; and WI TU State Council Chair (one 1-year term) – Doug Seidl. On behalf of GBTU, our community, and the cold-water resources of Northeast Wisconsin, thank you.

In April Jim Vanden Branden and his family joined the DNR in stocking 325 brown trout in Haller Creek. This effort helps provide a strong urban fishing opportunity near Green Bay. Thank you to Jason Breeggman and the Vanden Branden family for their support.

In May we partnered with the Oconto River Chapter and the DNR to work on stream and shoreline habitat and fishability brushing on Doty Creek. This work improves

trout habitat and enhances angling access. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this effort. The remaining GBTU summer habitat improvement days include July 18 on the South Branch Oconto River with the U.S. Forest Service and August 15 at the North Branch Beaver Creek with the DNR.

In March our Veterans Service Program (VSP) hosted John Gremmer's "The Four-Step Method of Fly Casting" with Dan Harmon III of the Fly-Fishing School. Approximately 10 veterans and seven volunteers participated, making the event a strong success. Thank you to Dan, our VSP volunteers, and especially our veterans. As the summer season begins, our VSP program is shifting from indoor activities to veteran fishing trips. The program plans to host one outing each month throughout the summer. Veterans and volunteers of all experience levels are welcome. For more information, please contact Veterans Program Coordinators Jim Hauer at jehauer1@icloud.com or by phone at 920-639-3718 or Paul Kruse at kruser2@new.rr.com or by phone at 920-639-2361.

For updates and additional information, visit greenbay.tu.org and follow Green Bay Trout Unlimited on social media.

—Adrian Meseberg



GBTU FLY-CASTING CLINIC: VETERANS AND VOLUNTEERS



HALLER CREEK TROUT STOCKING

Youngsters are always willing participants at this annual stocking event.

Frank Hornberg Chapter

The Frank Hornberg Trout Unlimited Chapter entered a new chapter of its own in May 2026 with

the election of a new board of directors. After many years of dedicated leadership, a new group of volun-

Adrian Meseberg

Jim Vanden Branden



Chapter News

Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter

The Fennimore Trout In the Classroom released their fingerlings into Castle Rock Creek in late May.

Our restoration project on the Blue River at the Snowbottom Wildlife Area restarted in early June and will be completed this summer. At this point our chapter has done more than 23 miles of stream restoration, worth about \$3 million dollars. We could not have done it without the help from many other TU chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Our annual banquet was held on May 1 and was successful in atten-

dance and fundraising.

A Learn to Fly Fish program on May 16 had 11 students and was run by nine instructors and coordinated with the Southern Wisconsin Chapter, Chuck Horn and the DNR.

We also teamed up with the Southern Wisconsin Chapter for some work days, including a tree-planting event on Smith Conley Creek and a day at Big Spring Creek cutting and treating willows and box elders. The DNR now takes over in the fall or spring with burns and other steps to restore native vegetation.

—*Brian Larson*

Lakeshore Chapter

We've been enjoying a busy season despite the slow start to spring. In April we celebrated Earth Day with a work day to begin helping our forest recover from the emerald ash borer devastation. We had 27 volunteers including 11 youth plant 100 native trees along the Onion River. These were "park stock" trees from the State DNR nursery that averaged about 5 feet in height. The success rate on these trees should be very high. Many thanks to Boy Scout Troop 801 from Sheboygan, the Outdoor Club from Fond Du Lac St. Mary Springs High School, the adult leaders and Lakeshore TU members for their hard work.

Lakeshore made our first chapter fishing trip to The Driftless Area in April. A dozen members rendezvoused at The Driftless Angler on Thursday morning. After getting some advice and various necessities, we broke up into small groups to try various streams around Viroqua. Throughout the weekend, we swapped fishing partners and streams. This allowed us to learn

from each other and enjoy new waters alongside old favorites. On Friday night we met at Gassers in Viroqua to swap stories and enjoy a great meal together.

By all accounts the trip was a rousing success. The fishing was excellent and the camaraderie was even better. Many thanks to John Krueger and Dave Kempka for organizing and running this fantastic trip. We are already looking forward to doing it again next year.

In May board member Wendy Lutzke attended the Midwest Regional Rendezvous at Roscommon, Michigan. She reported back to our chapter on important topics covered by national and regional TU staff during the conference seminars, shared fresh ideas on how to engage the public in our chapter's activities, and encouraged our membership to consider attending a rendezvous in the future. She also retold her own "fish story" that included a drift boat on the famed Au Sable River—a truly memorable experience.

Other May activities included



LAKESHORE MEMBERS ENJOYING THEMSELVES AT GASSERS IN VIROQUA



LAKESHORE CHAPTER TREE PLANTERS IN ACTION



LAKESHORE CHAPTER'S TREE-PLANTING CREW

other successful workdays by our Midweek Streamers and our Saturday volunteers along Ben Nutt Creek, as well as our annual meeting and picnic that included our chapter election with a full slate of board members voted in for the next year. We enjoyed great food and conversation at Willow Falls of Johnsonville.

We also helped TIC teachers from Oshkosh, Plymouth and Sheboygan release their trout into local waterways while interacting with streamside education. This is not only important to our conservation mission but is also a wonderful op-

portunity to work with students, teachers and parents.

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered during the past three months. Nothing happens without you. We are grateful to our members who stepped up to the responsibilities of leadership for the next 12 months, including President Al Wortz, Vice President Miles Thompson, Treasurer Herb Twiss, Secretary Wendy Lutzke and board members Myk Hranicka, Dave Kempka, John Krueger and Tim Mooney.

—*Wendy Lutzke and Al Wortz*

Marinette County Chapter

Unfortunately the outdoors show was cancelled due to the 40-plus inches of snow that shut down Northeastern Wisconsin. In April we were able to have our 42nd annual fundraising banquet. The banquet went very well, and we were able to fund all of our summer

projects that we committed to do at the December Northeast Regional meeting. We are hoping to help the Green Bay Chapter with their summer work projects and possibly do some trail brushing on our own.

—*Dale Lange*

Oconto River Chapter

It's spring in Oconto County and that means several things for our Oconto River Watershed Chapter. Our March chapter meeting featured a guest appearance by the DNR's Tammy Paoli to discuss DNR projects in our watershed. Given the uncertain nature of DNR resources and funding, Tammy emphasized the importance of the Northeast regional TU chapters supporting the LTE program in the area. Our chapter will continue to put a large portion of our resources toward this program.

We had a successful banquet in April. Chaired by Gary Lemmens, the banquet was held at Romy's Holiday Inn on Kelly Lake and drew more than 250 people.

After that came trout stocking in the Oconto River at multiple sites including Suring, Hinz, Pulcifer and Underhill. Thanks to a generous donation from another sportsmen's club in the area and some individual donors, we did two stockings totaling more than 1,600 rainbow trout

of 13 inches or more. Chapter member Lyman Wocking oversaw the project.

Our TIC program is thriving. Although there were mixed results growing the fish to maturity, there were only good things to say about the nature of the learning process and the enthusiasm of the student participants and the teachers.

Students from Gillette High School participated in learning to fly cast and to fish using their new found skills at Lyman Wocking's pond. Students caught more than 100 fish and everyone had a great time.

Our next meeting is in July and will be coupled with the chapter picnic, again at Wocking's pond. It will include a potluck, fishing and camaraderie. We thank the Wockings for their hospitality.

—*Dean Simon*



SOUTHEAST WISCONSIN CHAPTER MEMBERS AT PARADISE CREEK

Chapter News



SEWTU VOLUNTEERS INSTALLED BIOLOGS ON WHITEWATER CREEK



THE CREW FROM SEWTU AND OAK BROOK AT WHITEWATER CREEK

Southeast Wisconsin Chapter

Tichigan, Paradise, Rosenow and Whitewater creeks are coldwater diamonds in the rough of southeast Wisconsin's urban sprawl and have been the focus of SEWTU's workday efforts this spring.

Our first project was at Tichigan in Racine County, where we teamed up with the Oak Brook Chapter to install bio logs, plant trees and shrubs, and remove a large willow tree. Bio logs stabilize the streambank, prevent erosion, and promote a narrower free-flowing stream. We headed north to Waukesha County in May to work on Paradise Creek in the Kettle Moraine State Forest to place 50 bio logs and remove invasive plants.

At Rosenow Creek in Oconomowoc, our weekday work crew removed buckthorn from the banks of this gem of a wild brook trout stream less than one hour from downtown Milwaukee. And we combined forces with Oak Brook again on an unseasonably hot and steamy early June morning at Whitewater Creek in Walworth County to stabilize the banks with 40 bio logs, which supplemented our project there last fall. Thank you to our partners from Oak Brook and to our workday crews.

Our habitat projects are organized by Ken Rizzo, Rick Larkin, Joe Schroeder and Chuck Staley, who work with the DNR throughout the year to determine where and how to allocate our resources, and provide the work crews with a delicious brat fry following every project. Special recognition to Ken, who has not missed a workday in eight years as the chair of the Habitat Committee. He turns things over to Rick moving forward. We take a summer break and resume workdays in September at Scuppernong Creek, which has received extensive restoration over the years from our chapter.

We were privileged to host Cheryl Nenn from the Milwaukee Riverkeeper at our March chapter meeting. Cheryl discussed the latest restoration efforts on the Milwaukee River as part of the federal Estuary of Concern Program, which includes dredging, habitat restoration, beach cleanup projects and regular monitoring of pollutants. Many of our members remember

the days when the Milwaukee River was an industrial wasteland and appreciate the years of efforts put in by groups like Riverkeeper to provide the wonderful bass, salmon and steelhead fishery we enjoy today.

The Milwaukee River returned to our agenda at our April meeting when Mary Hollenbeck and Emma Millsap of Riveredge Nature Center described their program to reintroduce sturgeon to the river. Riveredge is at the forefront of Wisconsin's sturgeon reintroduction program by obtaining eggs from the Wolf River and bringing them to its rearing facility in Ozaukee County, where they hatch in Milwaukee River water. Throughout the spring, summer, and early fall, volunteers rear the fish in time to tag and transport them to be released into Lake Michigan at the mouth of the Milwaukee River during Sturgeon Fest in late September or early October.

We completed our chapter meetings for the spring with outgoing President Rick Larkin's highlights from his fishing trip to Argentina this winter. Rick, the consummate Renaissance man, discussed not just Patagonian brown trout but also the diverse languages heard on the street in Buenos Aires, the pleasures of Argentinian steaks, and the perils of yerba mate.

Rick has served as chapter president for the past three years and is the heart and soul of SEWTU. Thankfully, Rick will remain active with the chapter on our Habitat Committee. I will try to fill his big shoes as president for the next two years with help from our new Vice President Chuck Staley, who is replacing longtime member Jim Wierzbza in that role. Joe Schroeder remains as secretary and Stan Strelka as treasurer. Many thanks to Rick, Jim, Chuck, Joe, Stan and Ken for their dedication.

We'll host a casting clinic at Greenfield Park in West Allis on July 21. Our Driftless Mentored Weekend is August 28-30 at the West Fork Sports Club in Avalanche. The Habitat Fundraiser and Film Festival will be at The Bavarian Bierhaus in Glendale on September 17. We hope you join us.

—Brian Mullins

Southern Wisconsin Chapter

Spring sprang swiftly for SWTU: It's been go-go-go with chapter gatherings, elections, stream workdays, casting clinics, first-aid training and, of course, peaceful times fishing along flowing waters.

As we take a bit of a summer break, we look back with pride at our last three gatherings. We began spring with our Meicher Madness Auction, which was fast, fun and lucrative to the tune of about \$6,400.

In April, we welcomed Jason Freund who, after a storm delay, completed an excellent presentation on the trout, habitat, research, restoration and fishing in the Driftless Area near LaCrosse. It's clear that the DNR, UW-LaCrosse and Coulee Region TU have a great partnership that benefits trout, anglers and students.

In May, we were honored to host John Griffith, a Life Member of TU and the leader of an effort by American Songbird Management and Recovery and other conservation organizations to purchase and preserve the Gratiot River watershed on the Keweenaw Peninsula in Michigan's UP. This is a multi-million dollar effort to preserve thousands of acres for public enjoyment. We learned much and wish John the greatest success in his endeavors, which you can easily learn about through a quick web search.

Conservation Chair Jim Hess once again partnered with the DNR, fellow TU chapters and other conservation organizations to organize a series of highly productive

workdays. At some, invasive trees were felled and brush was stacked for burning in winter. At others, native trees were planted and fenced for protection. Most were held deep in the Driftless Area, while one was held not far from downtown De Forest along the Yahara River, which is now listed as trout water. We were happy to see many volunteers at our work days, including regulars and newcomers, young and old.

Work days generally involve cold or heat, tools of some kind and all manner of physical activity. We leave feeling tired but also refreshed by good, hard, meaningful work. These days have largely passed without incident, but we also know the importance of being prepared, which is why we sponsored a first aid and CPR training session for our members. The mix of online and classroom learning was attended by many workday regulars. They hope to never have to put the knowledge to use, but we will enter the fall workdays feeling better that they are with us.

The Riversmith Clinic was once again a part of Cross Plains Trout Days, and we think we may have had the most participants ever. Our casting instructors were busy teaching dozens to cast with more folks stopping by the booth to learn about trout, local streams and the Southern Wisconsin Chapter. We had good partners in nearby booths including Groundswell Conservancy and the Black Earth Creek Water-



SOUTHERN CHAPTER MEMBERS ENJOYING A GARFOOT CREEK WORK DAY



SOUTHERN WISCONSIN CHAPTER AT THE YAHARA RIVER IN DEFOREST

Tired, proud and big smiles from SWTU's crew after a morning of work along the Yahara River in De Forest.



Chapter News

shed Association. Many thanks to Andy Morten and Dave Fowler for organizing the clinic, and to all of the volunteers who helped teach, encourage and inspire our many visitors.

Thank you. As always, visit swtu.org to learn more about us and what we're up to.
—Drew Kasel

Wild Rivers Chapter

We'll have work days at the Clam River State Fishery Area July 13 and 14 at the North Fork of the Clam River on Heart Lake Road from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
We'll be doing trail access brushing at North Fish Creek near Karaba Road in July/August
Two volunteers are needed to

help the DNR with electroshocking at North Fish Creek and Pine Creek (Old U.S. Highway 2) in early September
To volunteer at these events contact John Simonson at tu.wildrivers@gmail.com.
—John Simonson

Wisconsin Clearwaters Chapter

Our late winter/early spring series of Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter member meetings helped get everyone well informed and motivated to fish our local streams. These included presentations by DNR fisheries biologists on what they are observing in their regions.
In March Fisheries Biologist Joseph Gerbyshak presented the results of his monitoring efforts in the trout streams in Chippewa, Eau Claire and Pepin counties and eastern Dunn County. At the April meeting Fisheries Biologist Zach Woiak discussed the state of trout in

Buffalo, Jackson and Trempealeau counties. The Wadable Trout Streams Summary Report handouts that they bring are highly sought after and valued.
In addition to the trout population monitoring results, the biologists discussed additional topics such as summaries of habitat improvement and future projects. Both presenters provided clarification and the rationale for the recent changes in Wisconsin DNR trout-stocking policies. We should all be proud that the habitat improvement efforts provided by and supported



SWIM! BE FREE!
Boyceville Elementary School students release their classroom-raised trout.



THE BIG DAY: LETTING THEM GO
Dale Dahlke assists Knapp Elementary School students release their classroom-raised brook trout into Knapp Pond.



UW-STOUT STUDENTS SEARCHING FOR INVERTEBRATES
UW Stout fly-fishing students, who were instructed by Dale Dahlke and Dennis Vanden Bloomen, found a wide variety of invertebrates in a restored section of Wilson Creek.

by Wisconsin Trout Unlimited is increasing the natural reproduction of trout in streams all across the state to the point where many no longer are dependent on stocking to maintain fishable populations.
We wrapped up our meeting season in May with a brat feed at Riverside Park in Menomonie with the UW-Stout Five Rivers Trout Fishing Club. Locally sourced outstanding brats and Italian sausages disappeared quickly from the grills. We all swapped early season fishing stories and tried to wake up smallmouth in the Red Cedar River by waving fly rods over the water.
Mark your calendars for October 13 for the start of the 2026 Clear Waters Members Meetings with a presentation by Emily Fairfax on the impact of beavers on streams. Emily is highly regarded as an expert in the area of beaver ecology. This will be an interesting presentation on a topic that impacts all of us who fish streams and rivers.
In May Gary Fish, Glenn Johnson, Joe Knight, Jim Roden, Dean Rosemeyer, Clifford Shoemaker, Kevin Stellges and Matt Wysocki planted 60 swamp white oaks in the areas we had previously cleared along Hay Creek and McCann Creek in Chippewa County. An informal survey of previous plantings indicated 90 of the 100 trees planted with tube protectors survived.
The smaller trees of other species

planted without tube protection have been nearly impossible to find in the dense grass. Coincidentally, there have been reports of unusually fat deer in the area.
In May, as part of the series "Lectures and Libations" held at The Forage in Eau Claire, long-time chapter board member Tom Rather talked about fly-fishing creativity and health with his presentation entitled "Casting for Calm and Connections."
Also in May, a team from the Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter and students from UW-Stout Five Rivers Trout Fishing Club came together at Beaver Creek Nature Preserve to support the Stream Girls program. Stream Girls is a STEM program held annually in partnership with Girl Scouts to provide enthusiastic young women exposure to the world of fly fishing and trout fishing. The two-day event included fly tying, casting, learning about trout habitat and the opportunity to fish at Punks Pond.
May also was release time for a number of Trout In the Classroom projects. The Boyceville students had a full day outing that include fly-tying lessons, fly-casting instruction and the release of their classroom-raised brook trout. Students from Knapp Elementary School released their classroom-raised trout into Knapp Pond.
—Bob Mitchell

Wisconsin River Valley Chapter

Our chapter lost cherished member Bob Paine recently. I will never forget how much he enjoyed sharing what he knew. That was Bob—always teaching, always encouraging and always giving. Bob began fly fishing in the 1950s, and over the decades he became a skilled angler and tyer, and a generous mentor to countless others.
Before moving to Wisconsin he taught several fly-fishing and fly-tying courses at a community college in northern Illinois, along with many other venues.
Since 2017, he continued that passion for teaching at Nicolet College in Rhinelander, where he led three different fly-fishing and tying courses under the Orvis School Program.
His love of learning and sharing didn't stop there. Bob reviewed fly-fishing books and even created book suggestions for Christmas lists. He embraced history, as well, often

attending pioneer-living reenactments in full period costume.
Many of us remember the email invitations he'd send out for fly-tying bees—another way he brought people together. Bob made many friends in the fly-fishing world, and he truly enjoyed every opportunity to pass along his knowledge. He also gave his time generously to our chapter's youth events, helping introduce the next generation to the sport he loved. He will be deeply missed. Our most sincere condolences go out to his wife, Carolyn, their children and their entire family.
Our March program featured Tom Boisvert, Conservation Program Manager for the Lincoln County Land Services Department. Tom shared information regarding this important stream-crossing-inventory project.
For more information on this program or the status of a culvert or

Chapter News



WIS. RIVER VALLEY MEMBERS AT THE TAYLOR COUNTY YOUTH EXPO

Haley Collinsworth, Linda Lehman, John Meachen and Jim Slayton helped kids tie flies at the Taylor County Youth Expo.

stream crossing near you, you can go to <https://great-lakes-stream-crossing-inventory-michigan.hub.arcgis.com/>

Thank you Tom for your presentation and for all who attended.

April featured "Steelhead Fishing Great Lakes Tributaries" by Jake Pease. It was a packed house for Jake's presentation. He had many great pictures and shared a few secrets on how he finds new water to explore. He also makes his own spawn sacs and freezes them. Thank you for the information, Jake, and thank you to all who attended.

May featured "Fly Design for Both Tyers and Non-Tyers Alike" by the late Bob Paine. He challenged us to think about presentation and gave tips on how to improve it.

May also included the Taylor County Youth Expo at the Taylor County Fair Grounds in Medford. Many thanks to Terry Cummings and Al Hauber for helping kids get the feel for casting a fly rod and to tyers Jim Slayton, John Meachen and Haley Collinsworth, who joined me in helping kids tie flies. The weather was beautiful and we couldn't believe how polite the students were. I was impressed at the number of times I heard "Please" and "Thank you." It was wonderful.

May also featured Kiwanis Kids

Day in Wisconsin Rapids. Jim Slayton and I went down to tie flies with kids. It was another beautiful day and we could watch kids with harnesses and helmets climbing a huge tree on the grounds. In my younger years, I certainly would have been in line to try it out.

As for coming events, we have not yet started planning the fall presentations, so please watch your email for announcements.

Our June 20 workday had volunteers helping the DNR's Taylor Curran and his crew doing brush bundling on the Evergreen River in Langlade County, near White Lake. This was a joint effort with several Trout Unlimited chapters from the Northeast region. Thanks for those who came out to help.

We have a new Instagram account. If you would like to share pictures of a good day on the water, an incredible bug hatch, or scene with a river running through it, you can post it on our Instagram account at "wisrivervalleytroutunlimited."

To stay up to date on upcoming events and activities, please check out the Riffle newsletters and our "Wisconsin River Valley Trout Unlimited" Facebook page. We hope to see you out on a stream somewhere.

—Linda Lehman

Wolf River Chapter

Greetings to all from the Wolf River Chapter. It has been a busy and successful spring for the chapter. The Wolf has fished fabulously with many reports of brookies, big browns and a few bow's being caught. The warmer weather has had an impact on this, of course. Hatches have been heavy and often.

There was a huge flush throughout the Wolf River Watershed and in particular the Nine Mile Creek system, which has been the focus of intense restoration by the chapter. Several workdays have already been devoted to continue this work. In June a crew of six started removing obstructions to flow on Poor Farms Springs Creek. They worked from the confluence with Nine Mile Creek Upstream about a quarter of a mile.

At 10:30 a.m., Nine Mile Creek's temperature was 63 degrees and Poor Farms Creek was at 67 degrees. Two small springs on the north bank of Poor Farm Creek were 58 and 57 degrees. When trees that had fallen in were removed and

flow was increased, they went down to 47 and 44.5 degrees. Both are gravel bottomed and will be flushed out in time to provide spawning areas for brookies that for decades have been useless for spawning. The main channel itself is a combination of pools and riffles that had been silted and slugged up for more than 100 years of logging and beaver activity. Much of the slug is very thick and difficult to work in.

Combined with the heat and lack of shade, it was a very tasking day. We also removed the remains of an old logging bridge, along with numerous leftover logs and dead trees that had fallen in over time. The stream did start to narrow a slight amount, but it will take the forces of time and nature to really make a difference. There is approximately another mile to clear before reaching the three springs that form the headwaters.

The beauty of a work day lies in the future. In late May we visited sites upstream on Nine Mile Creek where we did work last year. Tre-

mendous amounts of both silt and sand had been flushed out, along with other detritus materials, much thrown up onto the banks and others downstream. The channel is noticeably narrower and deeper in many places. Rock and gravel that had been buried for decades is again exposed. There are more baby brookies than I have ever seen in the system. And the kingfishers, herons and mink are catching on to this as well. Hopefully these little brookies will get smart before they get eaten.

When we reached the confluence of Nine Mile Creek and Homestead Springs at 2 p.m. the air temp was 81 degrees, while Nine Mile Creek was a very pleasant 63 degrees. Un-

fortunately, Homestead was a very bad 81 degrees. There is much work to do downstream from this confluence for about a mile and it is a very difficult location to reach. But the chapter's hard-working members will overcome these obstacles. It's predicted that when our work is done there, that Homestead Springs will run a much more suitable temperature of around 70 degrees under the same daytime temperatures. We'll let you know.

All able-bodied volunteers are welcome on workdays and others are welcome just to come and observe what the Wolf River Chapter does. For more information contact John Carbonari at (715) 902-0390.

—John Carbonari



WOLF RIVER CHAPTER WORK DAY CREW ON POOR FARM CREEK



WOLF RIVER MEMBERS REMOVED THESE OLD LOGGING BRIDGE REMAINS



ONE OF MANY SPRINGS IN THE UPPER NINE MILE CREEK AREA

The Wolf River Chapter's hard-working crews are doing all they can to protect and maintain the coldwater system.

The Nipigon

The Nipigon River in Ontario is a world-class destination for those who love to fish for big brook trout. There are also lake trout, salmon, steelhead, northern pike and walleye in the Nipigon River system.

By Tom Meyer

The Nipigon River in Ontario is a world-class destination for those who love to fish for big brook trout. The world record brookie was caught in the Nipigon River in 1915 by J.W. Cook. It measured 31.5 inches, weighed 14 lbs. 8 ounces and was caught on a live minnow.

There are also lake trout, salmon, steelhead, northern pike and walleye in the Nipigon River system. There have been numerous books written about the Nipigon, as well as magazine articles, TV shows and YouTube videos. It's one of those famous places where it's cool just to be there and take in the scenic beauty and the history.

The Nipigon is located in the Thunder Bay district. It starts to the north and west of Thunder Bay at Lake Nipigon and flows 30 miles south into Lake Superior. The Nipigon is the largest tributary to Lake Superior. There are three hydro-electric dams along the route. The fishing areas are basically split into three destinations, the "Big Lake" as the locals call it is Nipigon Lake, the headwaters of the river. Heading south is Jesse Lake which is between dams and a beautiful area to fish.

The lower Nipigon flowing from below Jesse Lake to the mouth of Lake Superior is another destination. Due to strict regulations regarding brook trout fishing on Nipigon, one should just consider it all catch and release, although in some areas you are allowed to keep one fish over 22 inches. The season opens in late April and closes on Labor Day.

In August of 2025, a foursome consisting of Jeff Treu, Mike Salas, Vic Gulla and myself travelled to the Nipigon. We booked two days of guide service with Affinity Angling. Neil Leduc is the owner and somewhat of a celebrity guide who has appeared on a number of TV shows.

There are also a couple of very productive tributaries to Lake Superior near the Nipigon and we were hoping the timing would be right and the brookies would be making their spawning run from Lake Superior into these tributaries. The species of brook trout in Lake Superior are generally called coasters.

Some question whether they are a special strain of brook trout, but they certainly grow larger than stream trout. Once thought to be a unique strain, the latest genetic research done in the Nipigon Bay region of Canada supports the theory that these fish are simply stream-source brook trout.

Then again, a National Park Service web site describes coaster brook trout as a special breed with different shaped tails and longer heads. Either way, they are beautiful fish that fight hard and are fun to catch.

They can also be targeted along the shorelines of Lake Superior with flies during certain times of the year when they move into the shallow waters.

Jeff and Vic have been fishing the area for many years but usually go in the spring when the steelhead also migrate into the tribs.

Brook trout spawn in the fall and

some will migrate into the tributaries to spawn. There is also evidence that some will spawn along the shorelines of the lake where gravel conditions are just right such as the Isle Royale region. Chapter members Wayne Parmley and Joe Peikert do an annual springtime canoe/camping trip to Isle Royale and report catching numerous coasters some years when conditions are right while fishing the shorelines around the island.

Fishing from a boat or canoe, casting to the shore is an effective way to catch coasters in the spring but also wading along the shorelines when the lake levels are down. In the Nipigon region they have the option of fishing for coasters when they want to try something different or when the steelhead aren't cooperating.

Timing is critical

Timing is always an issue. There is a window of a couple of weeks to hit it just right but it can be a guessing game because you have to plan ahead to make motel reservations and to book a guide.

Like most fishing trips, you might get lucky and hit it just right or you might have to be satisfied with working hard for a few fish. Like my friend John Gremmer always says, keep your expectations low so you are not disappointed. If the timing is right and the fishing is good, that is a bonus. Just being in this beautiful scenic area and spending time with good friends should be enough to enjoy your trip.

So August was going to be a new experience for all of us and timing in the late summer was also an issue. We booked two motel rooms at a small family-owned motel on Lake Superior. We arrived in the afternoon and not long after unpacking our gear we waded up and walked along the shore casting into the gin clear waters of Lake Superior. There were rocks, gravel and boulders all along the shore and out as far as we could see and cast. It was quite windy but it looked like fishy water.

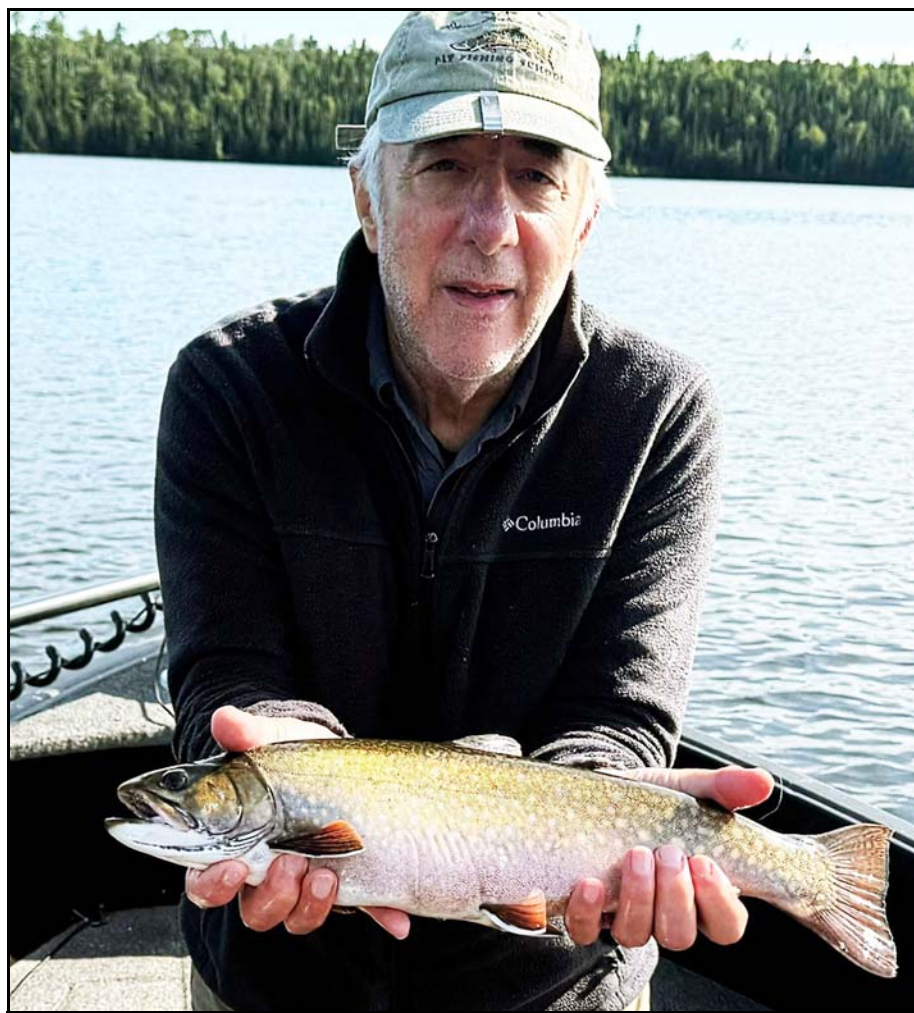
Shoreside surgery

Ten minutes after we started fishing, my friend Mike hollered for me to come over to him. He had a barbed, size 8 streamer hook buried in his forearm. We were at least 40 miles from the nearest clinic but I was ready to walk back to our truck and start driving.

He said absolutely not and informed me that I would be performing surgery on him to remove the hook from his arm. I had never done the procedure myself but have seen it done by others. I cut a piece of 12 lb. Maxima and wrapped it around the bend of the hook. I told Mike to look away, held the eye of the hook down against his skin and yanked on it hard.

It came out easily and didn't hurt me a bit. Mike said it stung a little but he didn't whine too much. We walked back to the motel and applied some Curad triple anti-biotic ointment on the wound and we both medicated ourselves with Bourbon on the rocks.

The next day Mike was feeling



THE AUTHOR WITH A 19-INCH NIPIGON BROOK TROUT

great and had no sign of infection so we met the guides, Neil Leduc and Ayden Ricker-Held, in a parking lot of a cafe in the town of Nipigon.

They said right away that the wind was about 25 mph, making it impossible to fly fish on the "Big Lake." Jesse Lake would be doable but still very windy. We launched the guide boats, which were 18-foot, deep-Vs with 90 horse power outboard motors, at a boat launch on the west side. Formed between two dams, Jesse Lake is a widening of the Nipigon River, and covers 2,311 acres. Portage dam is to the north and Cameron Falls dam is to the south. It has an average depth of 40 feet and is 140 feet at its deepest point.

At the boat launch we talked to two Canadian fishermen who were done fishing and trailering their boat. They had been trolling with

spinning gear and already had caught their limit of lake trout which they were fishing for.

I got excited because I love catching lakers even though we told the guides we wanted to target brook trout with fly rods. They said occasionally lakers will hit a streamer fly in the shallow water when the water temps are still low. This was August though and the lakers tended to be in the deep cold water.

The guides told us that we were going to start fishing with foam hopper patterns but the wind might dictate that we throw some weighted streamers in some spots. They said that some of the favorite spots were just too exposed but we would make do and fish some areas on the lee side of islands.

As we motored away from the boat launch I had a hard time con-



VIC GULLA WITH A 22-INCH NIPIGON BROOK TROUT



JEFF TREU WITH A GORGEOUS COASTER BROOK TROUT

trolling my excitement. I couldn't believe I was actually going to be fishing on the famous Nipigon. I often dreamed of catching five-pound or bigger brook trout with a fly rod. I've heard and read about the huge brookies caught in Labrador, but that trip seemed to be out of reach for me, whereas the Nipigon is only about a nine-hour drive.

The guide had us tie on foam patterns he called cicadas. It did have an orange/black foam body and a dark brown wing with brown rubber legs. It looked like a hopper pattern to me but I guess it could pass for a cicada. It wasn't long before Vic, fishing in Neil Leduc's boat, hooked up to a nice brook trout that turned out to



MIKE SALAS AND VIC GULLA MADE UP THE ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE

be 22 inches. A short time later I caught a 19-inch brookie, and both Mike and I lost a couple that seemed to be nice, chunky fish. It was really a scenic area and I recognized some of the rocky cliffs from the videos I had watched prior to the trip. Later in the day we switched to weighted streamers. In the end, it turned out to be a tough day of fishing, but we still had a lot of fun. We caught a few more smaller brookies and I lost a big fish that hit a streamer. I had him on for a couple minutes before he busted me off. I never did see the fish so I don't know if it was a laker or possibly even a northern. Our guide, Ayden, was young and enthusiastic and he worked hard for us. We had a lot of laughs and saw some beautiful water. Ayden told some good stories and some of them were probably even true. The next day we fished the lower Nipigon, from where it flows into Lake Superior and upstream about a mile. Again it was tough fishing. The wind wasn't as bad but the brookies didn't seem to be in the river at the spawning areas yet. Jeff caught a real nice brook trout about

20 inches and we caught a few smaller fish and a walleye but we really had to work for them. The next day we fished on our own checking out some of the other tribes but it was the same story, the coasters weren't there yet. The owners of the motel we stayed at live in a separate house near the motel and right on Lake Superior. They invited us to happy hour on their deck that night. It appeared that happy hour was a daily event and involved a few bottles of Canadian whiskey. Several family members of the owners joined us along with a couple of motel guests who were also fishermen. We solved all the world's problems that night and made some new friends. We were entertained by Vic playing the guitar and Mike playing the harmonica. Watching the sunset over Lake Superior was worth the drive up there all by itself. The consensus was that we were probably a week early and should plan accordingly for next year. Ahh, you should have been here next week. Tom Meyer is a member of the Central Wisconsin Chapter



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Driftless Area inventory continues

TUDARE’s seasonal techs continue the crucial work of assessing road-stream crossings throughout the southern portion of the Driftless Area.

By Sara Strassman, Driftless Area Program Manager

The Driftless Area team welcomed its seasonal technicians recently.

Maggie Dremsa is our crew leader, returning for her third summer with Trout Unlimited. We are thrilled to have her back.

Our new crew members Chase Laughlin and Avery Leigh are enjoying learning about the importance of stream connectivity and how to take the field measurements that help us prioritize crossings for replacement.

The seasonal technicians are conducting important assessment work that benefits communities, infrastructure managers and conservationists. The assessment process includes more than 100 metrics that are collected at each road-stream crossing site. These metrics help quantify the severity of impacts on where and how water, sediment, woody debris and fish move in proximity to these structures.

Our technicians also score infrastructure on its condition and whether there are time-sensitive maintenance needs. These factors allow projects to be ranked based on flood vulnerabilities, geomorphic impacts, fish passage concerns and infrastructure condition. This type of work experience provides aspiring biologists, engineers and project managers with practical skills such as geomorphic assessment, using

field equipment, recording accurate data and sampling water quality. Importantly, it also provides experience in managing remote work settings, developing schedules, estimating time and effort to complete tasks and data management.

This summer, we will wrap up our collaborative data collection effort with the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission as our crew

completes its work in watersheds flowing in and out of Dane County. They will continue to collect data in Green, Lafayette, Iowa, Sauk, Columbia and Rock counties to give us a strong understanding of the extent of fragmentation in our Driftless Area trout streams.

Chapters or partners considering addressing undersized, poorly aligned or perched culverts and

bridges in their watersheds can generate custom reports for their area. We hope to offer trainings or presentations this fall to demonstrate how it works. For now you can test it out at Great Lakes Stream Crossing Inventory or aquaticbarriers.org. If your chapter wants to sponsor a local workshop on this topic, please reach out to Sara Strassman at sara.strassman@tu.org



Maggie Dremsa, TU

HOT DAYS, HARD WORK, COOL STREAMS
Driftless crew members cooling off while surveying a road-stream crossing on Dane County's Blue Mounds Creek.



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