Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited
1423 Storytown Road
Oregon, WI 53575
wicouncil.tu.org

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Wisconsin Trout

Fall 2026



Landmark Conservancy

Watershed Access Fund, Wild Rivers Chapter help preserve White River property

The Wisconsin Council is pleased to announce that our Watershed Access Fund has again been able to help with the successful acquisition of property for public fishing, by supporting a major acquisition in northern Wisconsin.

The property, known as the Maxwell Forest, is along the famous White River a few miles south of Ashland. It was previously owned by Northland College and was used for outdoor education activities.

When the college closed its doors, all of its assets were set for liquidation. That included the 132-acre Maxwell Forest parcel.

When knowledge of Northland's liquidation became known to the public, Landmark Conservancy decided to purchase the and property began the process of securing funding.

Landmark reached out to the Council and Wild Rivers Chapter to see if we might be able to help protect this amazing parcel. This river has long been famous for big browns and for fishing at night during the hex hatch.

The Wild Rivers Chapter contributed $5,000 and the Watershed Access Fund contributed $25,000. Additionally, the Watershed Access Fund contributed $2,000 for timely survey work needed to expedite the closing.

Those funds, along with major contributions from other partners, allowed Landmark to complete the funding package.

The property closing took place in early August and the land and river frontage is now in public hands. Ownership of the property is now held by Bayfield County and will eventually be transferred to the state to become part of the White River Fisheries Area.

The good feelings about the White River acquisition come at the same time that there is a bit of apprehension about the future of other acquisitions in our state.

An important portion of the purchase price for the White River parcel was the last of the funding provided by the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. That program has long been the backbone of obtaining public access in Wisconsin and might have provided as much of half the purchase price. Without this funding, the partnering groups needed to come up with 100 percent of the purchase cost.

Other opportunities like this will be lost without that stewardship funding. Until the Wisconsin Legislature sees fit to renew the program, the Council, via its Watershed Access Fund, will keep trying to secure public access to trout streams.

We have long had a core of loyal donors who have provided funding to this grant program, so that we can help acquire parcels like these. The fact is, however, that our Watershed Access Fund program remains a small fund that has been successful at supplement projects that have also involved state stewardship funding.

To continue creating more opportunities we will need our supporters to continue their generous contributions, and we will need new supporters to come forward with donations.

If you have not supported the Watershed Access Fund in the past, now would be a great time to consider making a contribution. The Council's volunteer leaders will continue to pursue acquisition opportunities and make every effort to see that good acquisition opportunities are not lost.

If you have been a donor in the past or are considering becoming a donor, please see the excellent article in this newsletter that explains how donors can best give contributions to programs such as our Watershed Access Fund.

—Kim McCarthy, coordinator of the Council's Watershed Access Fund and Friends of Wisconsin Trout grant programs.

Great news, important reminders for Friends

Thanks to our generous donors, we've raised the maximum grant amount to $4,000.

The Council's Friends of Wisconsin Trout grant program is coming up on some important dates and changes for chapters planning to request a grant for the 2027 work season.

As usual, chapters that received grants for 2026 will need to complete and submit their end-of-year report prior to requesting another grant. This form will soon be emailed to chapters that received grants in 2026. The short report simply asks each chapter to verify whether their project was completed and the grant funds were used as described in their grant request. Completed end-of-year reports will be due December 1, 2026.

In early December all chapters will receive a copy of the Friends of Wisconsin TU language and the 2027 grant application, which must be submitted by January 15, 2027. Chapters will be notified whether or not their application has been approved shortly after the deadline. Checks will then be written and will be available for chapters to collect at the Council Annual Meeting in Oshkosh.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we've raised the maximum grant amount from $2,500 to $4,000.

And, as always, Friends of Wisconsin TU grants are available for habitat work only.

2027 promises to be a great year for habitat improvement, as our donors continue to provide generous contributions. Chapters will turn those dollars into habitat work to make trout fishing in Wisconsin better than ever.

—Kim McCarthy, coordinator of the Council's Watershed Access Fund and Friends of Wisconsin Trout grant programs.



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

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Southeastern Wisconsin (#078): Brian Mullins; brianmullins1213@gmail.com; sewtu.tu.org; www.facebook.com/southeastwisconsintroutunlimited; SoutheasternWITU on Instagram
Southern Wisconsin (#061): Topf Wells: www.swtu.org
Wild Rivers (#415): John Simonson: 920-212-0185; john@wiflyfisher.com; WRTU.org
Wisconsin Clear Waters (#255): Peter Jonas; petermjonas@gmail.com; 608-323-2006 wcwtu.org
Wisconsin River Valley (#395): Eric Pease; wrvtu.org
Wolf River (#050): Jon Graverson; 920-284-4309; wolfrivertroutunlimited@outlook.com WolfriverTU.org

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

TUCARES:

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

TU National Board of Trustees:

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

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.

WISCONSIN TROUT

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

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Executive Committee includes officers and vice chairs

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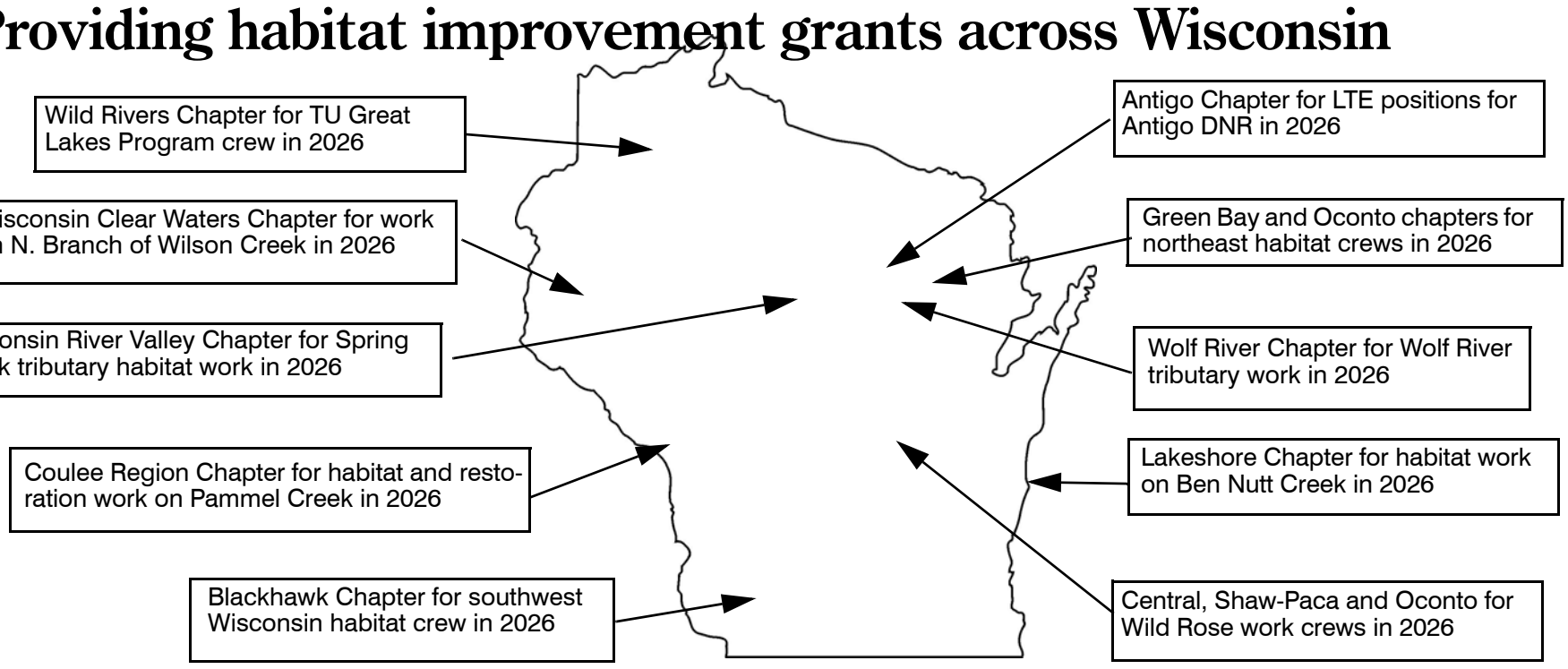

2027 Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited Banquet
Saturday, Jan. 23, 2027
Oshkosh Marriott Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center
1 North Main St., Oshkosh, WI 54901
Doors Open, with Cash Bar @ 4:30 p.m.
Dinner, Awards Program, & Raffles!
2027 WITU Banquet Sat. Jan. 23, 2027
For more info or to purchase tickets visit:
http://wicouncil.tu.org
Be an "Early Bird" - Purchase tickets ($50 each) on or before Dec. 31 to receive complimentary bucket raffle tickets!
To purchase by mail: send payment (payable to "Wisconsin TU") and names of attendees to
Jen Kuhr 6103 Queens Way Monona, WI 53716


Wisconsin Trout Unlimited needs your support
We're seeking individuals, organizations, and businesses to Sponsor our 2027 State Council Banquet to be held on Sat. Jan. 23 in Oshkosh
Levels of Sponsorship:
Headwaters = $125
Tributary = $250
River = $500
Watershed = $1,000
all levels include tickets to the event & bucket raffle tickets to use at the event!
For more info visit:
http://wicouncil.tu.org
or contact Jen Kuhr at jkuhr101@gmail.com
2027 WITU Banquet Sat. Jan. 23, 2027

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.

Providing habitat improvement grants across Wisconsin



Our Friends of Wisconsin TU

Dennis Anderson	St. Paul, MN
Jason Anderson	Mukwonago, WI
Scott Anderson	
Charles Barnhill	Madison, WI
Al Barry	Manitowish Waters, WI
Jim Bayorgeon	Appleton, WI
Jim Beecher	Madison, WI
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Blackhawk Chapter In memory of Don Studt	
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Donna Blegen	Spring Valley, WI
In memory of Don Blegen.	
Stephen Born	Madison, WI
Stuart Brandes, in honor of Don Studt	
Curtis Brandt	Stoughton, WI
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John Carr	Rice Lake, WI
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Don Clouthier	Appleton, WI
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In Memory of William Pearson	
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Bob and Teresa Zimmerman	Sturgeon Bay, WI

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Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter	Hudson, WI
Lakeshore Chapter	Sheboygan Falls, WI
Marinette County Chapter	Marinette, WI
Southeast Wisconsin Chapter	Milwaukee, WI
Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter	Eau Claire, WI

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 # _____

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 Janauary 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 at toddfranklinwistrout@gmail.com.

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.

Show us your Wisconsin TU license plates!

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



Watershed Access Fund: Obtaining public access

The Watershed Access Fund supports the acquisition of easements and properties to increase public access on our trout streams. As you know by now, we recently helped acquire a large property on the famous White River near Ashland, where serious anglers chase big browns and hex flies - often at night. Perpetual public access, thanks to you.

Our Watershed Access Fund Contributors

Gary Anoszko Dousman, WI
Andy Arendt Minong, WI
Charles Barnhill Madison, WI
Jeffrey Bartynski Eau Claire, WI
Jim Bayorgeon Appleton, WI
Jim Beecher Madison, WI
Stephen Born Madison, WI
Curtis Brandt Stoughton, WI
Ken & Marge Bukowski Green Bay, WI
Ron Campbell Ontario, WI
Christopher & Katherine Claflin Linwood, KS
David & Jill Coenen Combined Locks, WI
M.Scott Conner Oconomowoc, WI
Terry Cummings Rhinelander, WI
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Chuck De Zwarte Janesville, WI
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Daniel Schoenherr Menomonee Falls, WI
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Joseph Schroeder Germantown, WI
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Mike & Cheryl Stapleton Stoughton, WI
Ronald Suslick Peshtigo, WI
Jay Thurston Viroqua, WI
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Dennis Vanden Bloomen & Becky Flynn Eau Claire, WI
Greg Vodak Stoughton, WI
Scott & Holly Wagner Hudson,WI
David Wahl Lakewood Ranch, FL
Don Welhouse Kaukauna, WI
Topf Wells & Sally Probasco Madison, WI
John Widdifield Lannon, WI
Donald Williams Ft. Atkinson, WI
Paul Williams Madison, WI
Jim Willis Birchwood, WI
Bill Wisler Dodgeville, WI
Don Wolf Madison, WI
Bob & Teresa Zimmerman Sturgeon Bay, WI

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Green Bay Chapter Green Bay
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
736 Meadowbrook Court
Green Bay WI 54313

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Get your TIC egg orders in

With the new school year under way, now is the time for the Council to put in its order for trout eggs or fry from Wisconsin trout hatcheries for our Trout In the Classroom (TIC) programs throughout the state.

DNR staff like to know how many eggs or fry we require so they can plan accordingly to produce enough for their needs and that of our many chapter TIC programs. The State Council covers the shipping costs to get the eggs or fry from the hatcheries to for its chapters.

TIC teachers or coordinators are asked to contact Council TIC Coordinator Greg Olson at GregOlson@kiaptuwish.org. Greg will also get you in touch with the DNR to obtain the necessary permits to stock the trout at the end of the program.

Also, anyone interested in starting a TIC program can contact Greg.



Todd F., in memory of Todd D.

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

Mining Update

By Johnson Bridgwater, River Alliance of Wisconsin

Federal review of GreenLight Metals prospecting permit in Taylor County

An Environmental Assessment is underway for a much-expanded third round of drilling proposed by GreenLight Metals at its Bend deposit in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

GreenLight has applied for a federal prospecting permit to explore federally owned minerals. The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the mineral authorization, while the U.S. Forest Service oversees use of National Forest surface lands.

GreenLight proposes up to 25 drill holes totaling as much as 30,000 feet across roughly 500 acres. The Environmental Assessment entered public comment in late July, but federal officials have not established a final decision date.

GreenLight has already completed two rounds of drilling at the Bend deposit and has separate authorization for additional exploration on the Soo Line mineral parcel.

Environmental groups and tribal interests are watching the federal review closely. The important point: a prospecting permit is not a mine permit. Over the next six months, we are likely to see a federal decision, continued public scrutiny and, if authorized, drilling under the permit's conditions.

$50 Million Copperwood Grant awarded amid continued controversy in Michigan

Michigan's Strategic Fund (MSF) has approved $50 million in state funding for Highland Copper's controversial Copperwood mine, despite strong opposition from environmental groups, residents and others. And now there is controversy over how public comment was handled.

The MSF voted 7-2 in August to award $44.97 million to Highland Copper subsidiary Copperwood Resources and $5.03 million to the Gogebic County Road Commission. Although the board heard nearly two hours of public comment, 127 people registered to speak virtually were told they would have to wait until after the vote. The board said allowing them to speak beforehand would interfere with the orderly conduct of the meeting. Critics, including the 906 Report and Protect the Porkies, said the decision effectively silenced residents who could not attend in person.

The controversy also centers on the funding itself. The $50 million had previously been approved by the MSF but failed to secure legislative approval. Opponents say the latest action circumvents that roadblock. State officials say the money had already been appropriated and required no additional legislative approval.

Highland Copper says the grant will help assemble financing for a project expected to create 380 jobs. Opponents remain concerned about the Porcupine Mountains, Lake Superior tourism and taxpayer exposure. The state mining permit has been issued but is not yet effective, and construction has not begun. Highland says it expects to make a construction decision in 2027.

Walz moves to protect the Rainy River Watershed

It may sometimes feel like we are always fighting an uphill battle when it comes to dangerous mining proposals and protecting northern waters. Every once in a while, though, a moment of courage comes along to remind us that we are not alone.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz took executive action to protect the Rainy River Headwaters Watershed and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness from future nonferrous mining. Executive Order 26-10 directs state agencies to halt permitting and environmental-review work for nonferrous mining proposals in the watershed. It also bars the DNR from issuing new state mineral leases or permits there and requires review of existing leases for potential impacts on the Boundary Waters.

The order follows Congress' reversal of a 20-year federal mineral withdrawal covering more than 225,000 acres of Superior National Forest, reopening the possibility of projects such as Twin Metals' proposed copper-nickel mine near Ely. Walz cited the watershed's exceptionally clean waters and its direct connection to the Boundary Waters, while directing state agencies to pursue more permanent protections.

Public comment on Northshore Mining expansion

A company called Northshore Mining is seeking approval for an expansion of its existing Mile Post 7 project in Lake County Minnesota. The proposal includes relocating the West Ridge Railroad, extending Dams 1 and 2, constructing a rail switchback, developing a clay borrow site and approximately 12,900 feet of stream mitigation at four locations.

The DNR's public-comment period ended recently, but the lesson remains: Existing mines never stand still and deserve the same watchdogging as proposed new mines. The DNR will use the comments received to determine whether additional environmental review, potentially including a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, is warranted.

Other news from Minnesota

Gov. Tim Walz's administration moved to cancel a mineral lease held by Twin Metals, a significant step in the state's effort to prevent the company's proposed copper-nickel mine in the Rainy River Headwaters watershed.

At the same time, Talon Metals announced that it plans to use the Humboldt Mill in Michigan's Upper Peninsula to process ore from its proposed Tamarack nickel-copper-cobalt mine in central Minnesota. The decision means Talon would rely on an existing Michigan processing facility rather than develop a new mill elsewhere, further connecting the proposed Minnesota mine to the Upper Peninsula's mining infrastructure.

Both developments could have significant implications for the future of mining and water protection for our region's rivers and streams.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me at jbridgwater@wisconsinrivers.org or visit our mining pages at wisconsinrivers.org.





TU'S GREAT LAKES TEAM AND ITS PARTNERS COMPLETED A CULVERT REPLACEMENT PROJECT ON THE LITTLE BOIS BRULE RIVER THIS SUMMER

Great Lakes Program Update

By Chris Collier, TU Great Lakes Program Manager

I hope everyone had a great summer and is having a great start to fall. Here's what we've been up to:

We saw the completion of a culvert-replacement project on the Little Bois Brule River at Ranger Road, only a few hundred feet from the confluence with the Bois Brule River. Our contractors finished the work in early July. The project replaced two 4-foot-wide culverts with a single 21-foot-wide aluminum pipe arch. By replacing these undersized culverts, in-stream and lake-run fish are able to freely move from the Bois Brule to the Little Bois Brule.

We owe a huge thank you to Scott and Katti for overseeing construction, as well as our seasonal team of Ben, Willow and Nolan, for helping with site maintenance following construction. Grant funding for this project came from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Trout and Salmon Foundation.

Also on the summer list was a series of culvert projects led by the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest with cost-share provided by TU. Through this partnership, crews replaced five culverts on Wisconsin Creek and headwater tributaries in Florence County, helping to fully reconnect this class 1 tributary to the Border Brule River.

A big thank you goes out to the Chequamegon-Nicolet hydrology and heavy equipment teams who completed these culvert projects. Grant funding for this project was awarded by the We Energies Mitigation and Enhancement Fund.

There are a couple of TU-led projects to mention. As part of a multi-year effort in the Border Brule Watershed, we completed a culvert installation on a seasonal Forest Service trail that was impounding the headwaters to Brule Creek while also raising water temperatures.

Our team also worked with contractors to remove a remnant logging dam on Brule Creek that was impounding flows into an upstream spring-pond system. The dam was both restricting fish passage and raising stream temperatures by damming what should have been cold, spring-fed groundwater inputs to Brule Creek.

These projects were completed in August and September and reconnected more than three miles of habitat in the Brule Creek headwaters. Thank you Scott and Danielle for overseeing these projects. Funding came from a U.S. Forest Service Infrastructure Award made to TU and the Fund for Lake Michigan.

Our final two projects included a trail-repair project on the St. Peter's Dome–Morgan Falls trail system in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. Past floods caused significant damage to this popular trail system and created areas of increased erosion and groundwater seeps on the trail. This created more dangerous conditions for hikers and a risk of erosion into Morgan Creek and its tributaries.

We worked with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and a specialized trail maintenance contractor to plan and implement trail re-routes to protect the fragile ecosystems around the trail and make a safer route for hikers. The project is expected to be mostly complete this fall with some trailhead work to take place in 2027. Funding came from the USFS.

The second ongoing project is in the Bois Brule watershed, involving a barrier on Sandy Run Creek just upstream from the Little Bois Brule at Ranger Road. Sandy Run Creek is a class 1 tributary to the Little Bois Brule, but the culvert at State Highway 27 is undersized and perched, creating a full aquatic organism passage (AOP) barrier.

We started partnering with the DOT a few years ago to replace this culvert with a bridge, and despite several roadblocks (pun intended) the project finally broke ground in July.

The DOT is leading the project, while we were involved in design consultation and review. Our Scott Allen also drafted plans for boulder placements in the stream to help improve fish passage by breaking up stream velocities through the newly exposed stream bed. The project should be finished by October, with funding from the Wisconsin DOT, (NOAA) and the Trout and Salmon Foundation.

It's been a busy and productive summer for our Northern Wisconsin Great Lakes Team and it's impossible to give all the kudos the team and our partners deserve. I feel incredibly lucky to have this fantastic team here at TU and a great network of partners including all of you TU members out there who are reading this in Wisconsin Trout. Thanks for all you do and as always please feel free to contact me at chris.collier@tu.org if you want to learn more about our projects.



THE GREAT LAKES TEAM WORKED WITH CONTRACTORS TO REMOVE A REMNANT LOGGING DAM ON BRULE CREEK

AFS Meeting features fascinating trout research

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

I recently attended the 156th Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) in Columbus, Ohio, where I represented the Wisconsin Chapter of AFS as its current president. I also gave a couple presentations on trout research in Wisconsin, and to learn about the latest in fisheries research and management from others attending the meeting. Here I share some highlights from the symposia and presentations I attended.

For those unfamiliar with the American Fisheries Society, AFS is a scientific professional society of more than 8,000 members from around the world, including researchers, managers, educators and others who work with fish and fisheries. AFS promotes scientific research and sustainable management of fisheries resources by publishing peer-reviewed journals and books, organizing meetings at state, regional and national levels, and providing educational and professional development opportunities for fisheries students and professionals. You can find more information about AFS at https://fisheries.org.

Native trout symposium

A main interest I had in this year's meeting was participating in a symposium titled, "East vs. West: Approaches to Native Trout Management Across North America." This symposium was put together to highlight the conservation and management of native trout across North America, with a particular focus on brook trout conservation in the East and the challenges non-native brook trout pose to native trout in the West.

Wisconsin brook trout presentation

I gave a presentation on the management and conservation of brook trout in Wisconsin. As I pointed out in my presentation, if you travel on a flight from Boston to Minneapolis, you will have taken off and landed within the native range of brook trout. Here in Wisconsin, we are not the East, but we are an important state in the brook trout's native range. I took this opportunity to share our many challenges and successes concerning native brook trout management and to highlight the high-quality fisheries we have for brook trout across our state.

My presentation largely focused on our relatively new Brook Trout Reserves program. If you are unfamiliar with Brook Trout Reserves, you can find an overview of the program at https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/fishing/trout/BrookTroutReserves. In this program, DNR fisheries managers helped identify our best-of-the-best brook trout streams that may be most resilient to climate warming and on which we can focus our management resources to ensure our best wild brook trout fisheries remain viable. I do want to note that streams in the Brook Trout Reserves program are open to angling. The program does not impose any special regulations on fishing. Rather, the program helps fisheries managers allocate resources to streams where we are most likely to realize benefits from our work into the future.

The Brook Trout Reserves program was largely predicated on models projecting a 68-percent decline in stream habitat for brook trout between the late 20th and mid-21st century based on expected climatic changes in temperature. I wrote about this in the Winter 2020 edition of Wisconsin Trout. Here my presentation deviated from what many people are used to hearing on this topic.

It is now 2026, and we are halfway towards the mid-21st century. But to date we have not realized stream habitat losses for trout as projected by our models. The distribution of trout habitat in Wisconsin today in 2026 is similar to what it was at the turn of the century. In fact, many streams in which I have analyzed summertime stream temperatures dating back many decades have shown no increasing trend in stream temperatures during summer. In the Summer 2023 issue of Wisconsin Trout, I wrote about Lawrence Creek which is colder today during summer than it was in the 1960s.

Why might this be? Climatic warming in Wisconsin has primarily been during winter, as noted in the latest 2026 assessment report published by the Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts (https://wicci.wisc.edu/assessment-reports/). Summer daytime temperatures have not increased in Wisconsin as projected in the climate models used in the trout distribution models.

There is a saying among population ecologists: "All models are wrong, but some are useful." That appears to be the case here. We can't accurately predict what will happen to trout streams tomorrow. At best we can project what might happen. Here I think our models are useful. That is, they identify vulnerabilities of streams to climatic changes should they occur. This was instrumental in the development of the Brook Trout Reserves program.

The rest of my presentation focused on some of the management actions we use in Wisconsin to conserve and manage trout: securing and protecting habitat by purchasing streambank easements; reforestation of riparian areas to provide shading to keep streams cool during summer; identifying and removing barriers to trout movement including culverts and beaver dams; in-stream habitat development supported by trout stamp funds; using genetics to identify and stock native brook trout strains; and spatial and temporal monitoring of trout population trends.

There were four plenary sessions at the meeting and many concurrent sessions. Here are some highlights from some of the presentations and sessions I attended. This account is biased by my interests and my ability to only be in one place at one time:

Using genetics to eradicate non-native trout

Dan Schill, now retired from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (DFG), talked about his pioneering work in the use of YY males to eradicate non-native brook trout by shifting population sex ratios toward males. Brood stock were developed to produce YY males, as opposed to naturally-occurring XY males, so that all offspring have a Y chromosome and are male. In combination with sustained electrofishing suppression, sex ratios skewed towards 100 percent males within six years of initiating stocking and coincident with the complete elimination of wild females. I've always found this to be a fascinating approach to non-native trout eradication, but it has its limitations. To date it has primarily been successful in smaller, isolated populations where electrofishing can adequately suppress non-native trout abundance. I've heard of active work in developing YY male carp for suppressing invasive carp. That effort will be worth keeping an eye on.

The Idaho DFG's Jen Vincent also talked about their YY male brook trout stocking program. Post-stocking survival and reproduction by YY males has been documented, leading to male-skewed sex ratios. Results showed greater effectiveness of the program in streams versus alpine lakes, when stocking fingerlings versus catchable-sized trout and in systems simultaneously receiving manual suppression of wild trout.

Rio Grande cutthroat

Mike Ruhl, New Mexico Department of Wildlife, talked about management of native Rio Grande cutthroat trout and Gila trout in New Mexico. Translocation of wild trout has been used to protect threatened populations following extensive wildfires, where rain can wash wildfire ash into streams killing trout. New Mexico is working on developing YY male brown trout for controlling invasive brown trout.

Engineered genetic incompatibility (EGI)

Leland Feist, University of Minnesota, gave a fascinating presentation on Engineered Genetic Incompatibility (EGI) as a form of biocontrol. The idea is to generate modified fish that are unable to reproduce with wild fish. This approach to population control has been demonstrated with fruit flies and here it is being applied to zebra fish as a proof-of-concept for vertebrates. If it works, "sterile" males would be released, and any hybrid offspring produced with wild females would lead to non-viable offspring. The advantage with this approach to biocontrol is that the stocked fish are self-limiting in that they cannot produce viable offspring. When the stocked EGI fish die, they are gone from the population. Much work still needs to be done before such genetic biocontrol of invasive species becomes a viable management option.

Beefing up brook trout

Jud Kratzer of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife discussed his long-term work on strategically adding wood to Vermont streams to increase brook trout size and abundance.

Rotenone history

Martin Koenig, Western Native Trout Initiative, provided a history of rotenone use in Idaho. Rotenone had historically been used as a chemical treatment to remove native non-game "trash fish" to make room for introducing non-native sport fishes. Rotenone had fallen out of favor for a number of years but is now seeing increased use in conserving and managing native trout.

Ecology of coasters

Nadya Mamoozadeh, North Carolina State University, presented on her studies on the molecular ecology of coaster brook trout in Lake Superior. Genetic comparisons of coaster vs. stream-resident brook trout based on traditional genetic marker sets have not identified fixed genetic differences between the two life-history forms. However, she suggested more recent work on genome-wide markers have identified a small number of statistically significant markers associated with migratory life history. While identifying specific genetic variants may be important for restoring coaster brook trout, I do not expect knowledge of such genetic variants to be sufficient to make meaningful progress on coaster restoration.

UW-Madison graduate student Joey Munoz presented on his summer fieldwork investigating the thermal tolerance of salmonids including grayling and lenok in Northern Mongolia. This region of Asia has been experiencing warming rates three times the global average.

Lori Maloney of the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture talked about lessons from 20 years of brook trout conservation in the eastern U.S. Her main message was that the greatest value of landscape-scale science was in creating trusted partnerships to align priorities, leverage resources and scale conservation across state boundaries. An example was the newly-launched Upper Delaware Brook Trout Initiative that secured more than $4.5 million for brook trout restoration across a shared watershed. It kind of reminds me of the Driftless Area Restoration Effort.

The Iowa DNR's Caleb Schnitzler discussed brook trout management in Iowa's Driftless Region. Brook trout restoration stockings beginning in the 1990s have led to 26 streams with brook trout fisheries, and work continues towards expanding brook trout populations to more streams.

Timothy Schaeffer, current Board Chair of the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) and the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, gave a very well-received plenary presentation on NFHP as a successful model for landscape-scale aquatic habitat conservation.

Two overlapping partnerships in Wisconsin that trout anglers may be familiar with are the Driftless Area Restoration Effort and the Fishers & Farmers Fish Habitat Partnership. Both have been instrumental in leveraging funds for habitat conservation to benefit trout.

I sat in a fascinating afternoon session on issues pertaining to artificial intelligence in academia, research and the fisheries profession. Some of the benefits of AI in coding productivity have been astounding. But there is also likely to be a cognitive cost to people who rely on AI, and perhaps a cost in the accuracy and quality of products in which a human is left out of the loop. I expect AFS will have to set standards on the use of AI in the fisheries profession.

There were more presentations that I saw and many more that I did not. Some I didn't get to see addressed commercial fisheries, invasive carps, forward facing sonar in fisheries, fish passage, "MacGyvering" innovative problem solving in fisheries, and an inordinate number of presentations on gar—which I thought was a great thing. If you are interested in learning more about various topics on fishes and fisheries shared at the meeting, presentation summaries can be found on the AFS website at https://fisheries.org.

Giving Smarter:

Four ways to make your planned giving dollars go further.

By John Krueger and Scott Wagner

For many Trout Unlimited members, supporting conservation begins long before we ever write a check. We volunteer at workdays. We attend chapter meetings and banquets. We introduce children and friends to trout fishing. We advocate for clean water, restore habitat, improve stream access and, perhaps most importantly, contribute our time and energy to protecting a resource we hope will still be here for generations to come.

Eventually, many of us decide we would also like to make a meaningful financial commitment to the organizations and projects we care about.

That raises a surprisingly important question: What is the best way to give?

Americans are generous

Americans gave an estimated $617 billion to charitable organizations in 2025. Approximately $24.6 billion went to environmental and animal organizations, a category that grew 11 percent from the previous year. Conservation clearly occupies an important place in American philanthropy. (Source: Giving USA)

But the amount a donor gives and the after-tax cost of that gift are not always the same. Depending on how a gift is made, transaction costs and taxes may reduce the amount that reaches conservation—or increase the donor's personal cost. Choosing the right asset and giving method can sometimes allow a donor to provide more support without increasing the after-tax cost.

We spend considerable time thinking about where our charitable dollars can have the greatest impact. It is worth spending a little time thinking about how those dollars get there.

Four methods deserve consideration

For most individual donors, four methods deserve consideration: cash, appreciated securities, donor-advised funds and qualified charitable distributions from an IRA.

Each accomplishes essentially the same objective. How they get there—and their tax consequences—can be very different.

1) Cash: Simple, familiar, effective

Cash remains the simplest way to support a charitable organization.

Writing a check, making an electronic bank transfer or entering a credit card number on a donation page requires little explanation. For a $50 membership contribution or a $250 donation to a local project, simplicity may outweigh every other consideration.

Cash can also provide a straightforward charitable deduction for taxpayers who qualify. Beginning in 2026, taxpayers who do not itemize deductions can deduct up to $1,000 of qualifying cash charitable contributions—or $2,000 for married couples filing jointly. For taxpayers who do itemize, the tax rules have changed as well: charitable contributions generally become deductible only to the extent total qualifying contributions exceed 0.5 percent of adjusted gross income.

There can also be some friction in giving cash. A check or ACH transfer is generally inexpensive. Credit-card gifts, however, involve processing costs that commonly consume a few percentage points of the transaction. Some charities absorb those costs; others give donors the option to add enough to their contribution to cover the processing expense. On a $100 contribution, the difference is relatively insignificant. On a $10,000 gift, it is worth considering whether a check or electronic transfer would leave more money available for the intended project.

These types of investments are best suited for routine annual contributions, smaller gifts and donors who value simplicity.

2) Appreciated securities: Give the asset instead of selling it.

For investors, donating appreciated securities can be one of the most effective forms of charitable giving.

Suppose an investor purchased Apple stock years ago for $2,000 and those shares are now worth $10,000. The investor would like to make a $10,000 contribution to conservation.

The obvious approach would be to sell the Apple shares and donate the cash. But selling the stock creates an $8,000 capital gain. Federal long-term capital-gains tax rates are generally 15-20 percent, depending upon income. Higher-income investors may also be subject to the 3.8-percent Net Investment Income Tax, and state taxes may add another layer. Depending upon the donor's income and residency, taxes generated by the sale could consume a meaningful portion of the gain.

There is another option: Transfer the Apple shares directly to a qualified charity.

If the shares have been held for more than one year, the donor can generally deduct their fair market value, subject to applicable charitable-deduction limits, while neither the donor nor the tax-exempt charity generally pays capital-gains tax on the prior appreciation. The charity can therefore receive the entire $10,000 value of the shares, while the donor potentially receives the full charitable value of the gift without first realizing the capital gain.

That is money that might otherwise have gone toward taxes but can instead go toward restoring habitat, purchasing conservation equipment or securing public access.

How does it work?

Most publicly traded securities today are held electronically in brokerage accounts. The charity provides the donor with its brokerage information, including the receiving brokerage firm, account number and DTC number—the electronic routing information used to transfer securities between brokerage firms. The donor then instructs his or her broker to transfer a specified number of shares directly to the charity's account.

Don't forget to tell the charity that the shares are coming. An electronic transfer may not identify the donor or indicate how the gift should be designated.

For publicly traded securities, transaction costs are often quite small. The greater hurdle is usually administrative. The charity must maintain, or have access to, a brokerage account capable of accepting the securities.

These types of investments are best suited for investors with appreciated stocks, mutual funds or ETFs who intend to make a larger charitable contribution.

3) Donor-advised funds: Separate the tax decision from the giving decision

A donor-advised fund (DAF) adds another dimension to charitable planning: time.

Think of a DAF as a charitable investment account. The donor contributes cash, stock or other eligible assets to the account and receives the charitable tax deduction in the year of that contribution, subject to applicable tax rules. The assets can then be invested and potentially grow tax-free. Later—sometimes months or years later—the donor recommends grants from the account to qualified charities.

That separation between when you receive the tax benefit and when the charity receives the grant is what makes a DAF particularly useful.

Imagine an investor owns $50,000 of a highly appreciated stock. The stock has performed exceptionally well, the investor believes its valuation has become stretched, and this also happens to be a high-income year. The investor could donate the shares to a DAF this year and receive any applicable charitable deduction at that time. The DAF can then sell the shares without creating a capital-gains tax liability for the donor, reinvest the proceeds in a diversified portfolio whose subsequent growth is not subject to income or capital-gains taxes, and allow the donor to recommend charitable grants over the next several years.

Instead of trying to decide in December exactly which organizations should receive $50,000, the donor has effectively said:

"I know this money is going to charity. I simply haven't decided which charities or when."

That flexibility is powerful.

Several large national and well-known local DAF sponsors include Fidelity Charitable, DAFgiving360 (Schwab Charitable), Vanguard Charitable, Thrivent Charitable, Benevity Causes, CharityVest and Goldman Sachs Charitable. Administrative fees at several of the largest providers begin around .6-percent annually, although minimum fees, investment expenses and account minimums vary. Some providers have no minimum initial contribution; others are designed for larger accounts.

There is an important tradeoff.

Once assets are contributed to a DAF, they no longer belong to the donor. The contribution is irrevocable. The sponsoring organization legally controls the assets, while the donor retains advisory privileges to recommend eligible charitable recipients and investment options.

The sponsor also verifies that proposed recipients qualify under IRS rules. Typically, locating an established charity is as simple as searching by organization name or its Employer Identification Number (EIN). A smaller organization that is not already in the sponsor's database may require additional verification.

For conservation donors, DAFs can also provide flexibility in directing their support. Although standard donations to the Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited support the organization's general conservation efforts, donors may also wish to recommend grants for specific purposes, such as the Wisconsin Council's Watershed Access Fund or the Friends of Wisconsin TU habitat improvement fund, subject to the applicable DAF and charitable-use requirements.

Depending on how a gift is made, transaction costs and taxes may reduce the amount that reaches conservation—or increase the donor's personal cost.

These types of investments are best suited for larger or recurring donors, people with appreciated investments, donors who want to "bunch" several years of charitable contributions into one tax year, and people who want to separate the timing of the tax deduction from the timing of their charitable decisions.

4) Your IRA: An especially powerful tool after age 70½.

For older donors, one of the most tax-efficient charitable assets may be sitting in an IRA.

According to the Investment Company Institute, Americans held approximately $19.2 trillion in IRAs at the end of 2025, making retirement accounts one of the largest pools of household financial wealth in the country.

Traditional IRA owners generally must begin taking Required Minimum Distributions, or RMDs, at age 73 under current law. Those withdrawals are generally included in taxable income.

But the tax code provides a special opportunity for charitable donors even earlier. Beginning at age 70½, an IRA owner can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly from an eligible IRA to a qualified charity.

In 2026, an individual can make up to $111,000 of QCDs. For married couples, each eligible spouse can make up to $111,000 from his or her own IRA. Once the donor reaches RMD age, a QCD can count toward satisfying some or all of that year's required distribution. (Source: Charles Schwab)

Consider a 75-year-old retiree whose IRA requires a $30,000 RMD. Assume the retiree already intends to give $10,000 to conservation organizations during the year.

One approach would be to take the entire $30,000 RMD, report the taxable distribution as income, and then write $10,000 of charitable checks.

*See **GIVING**, page 25*

When chemical solutions become ecological problems

By Mike Miller Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

The Green Revolution of the 1950s and 1960s transformed global agriculture by introducing high-yield crop varieties, advanced irrigation and increased use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Later, the development of genetically modified crops that are resistant to herbicides further boosted farm productivity.

However, this modernization has increased agriculture's chemical dependency. Since the 1990s, the toxicity of many newer pesticides has increased, and global and U.S. pesticide use has doubled. While these chemicals help control pests and plant diseases, widespread and often indiscriminate use has caused severe, long-term environmental damage.

Following is a brief overview of the use of agricultural pesticides and the risks these chemicals pose to aquatic environments and findings from a statewide survey of pesticides in Wisconsin's streams and rivers. We'll focus on several classes of pesticides – neonicotinoids and pyrethroids -- where future study and efforts towards their management are needed.

A large variety

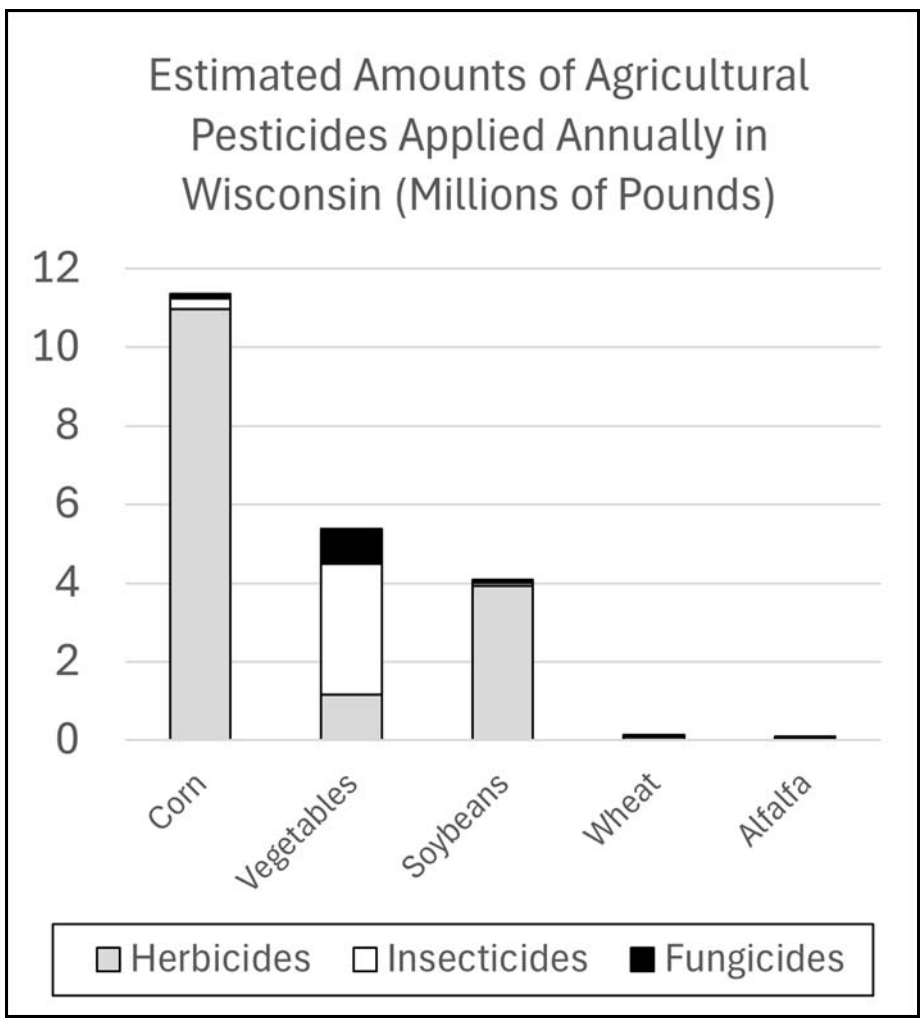
Approximately 500 different agricultural pesticides are registered for use in Wisconsin, most commonly, herbicides, fungicides and insecticides. They vary greatly in where they're applied, the quantities used, and relative toxicity to both pests and non-target plants and animals.

Pesticides are among the most toxic chemicals released into the environment, yet their types and quantities are not tracked by the federal government, and only a few states, such as California, New York and Arizona, maintain use-tracking databases.

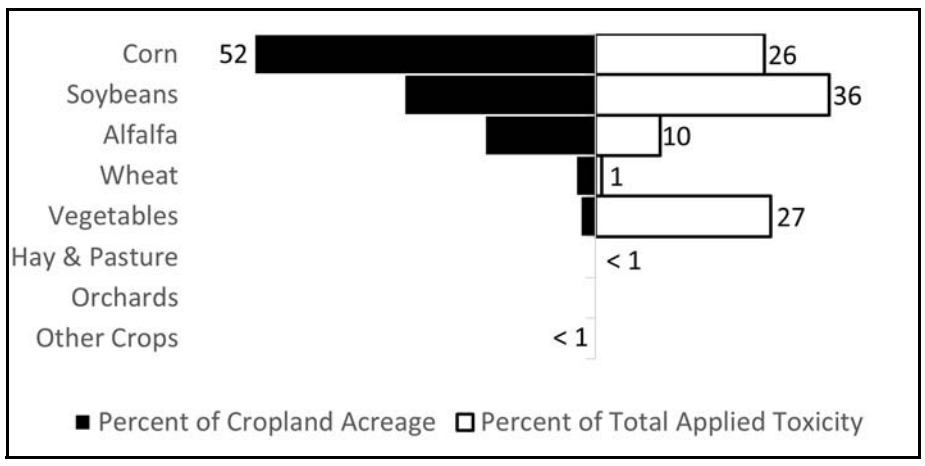
To fill this data gap, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) compiles data from farm chemical use surveys, industry pesticide application guidelines and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) crop acreage, to estimate pesticide types, quantities and use locations at county, state and national scales.

Pesticides often move far beyond their initial application sites, which can result in widespread environmental contamination. Offsite movement typically occurs through evaporation and aerial drift, surface runoff into adjacent waterways and downstream receiving waters, and infiltration into soils and groundwater. Many factors can influence pesticide movement including application methods, timing of the application(s), weather conditions, soil and crop types, watershed topography and characteristics of the chemicals themselves.

Farmland comprises approximately 40 percent of Wisconsin's 34.7 million acres, with roughly 30 percent, or just over 10 million acres, used for crop production. Although annual acreage fluctuates, corn is the state's dominant crop, covering nearly four million acres annually. Soybeans follow at approximately two million acres, then alfalfa (1.3 million acres), wheat (250,000 acres) and vegetable crops (230,000 acres).



AMOUNTS OF PESTICIDES USED IN WISCONSIN
Based on USGS estimates, Wisconsin agriculture uses approximately 20 million pounds of pesticides annually. Among the state's top five crop types, herbicides are the most widely used (roughly 16 million pounds), followed by insecticides (three million pounds) and fungicides (one million pounds). However, these figures do not include cranberry production, orchards, ginseng and specialty crops, or the vast quantities of pesticides applied to non-agricultural areas for forestry management, and on golf courses, lawns, gardens and urban green spaces, which also heavily impact Wisconsin's land and water resources.



CROPLAND TYPE VERSUS PESTICIDE TOXICITY
On the left-hand side of the plot is the percentage of the state's total cropland used for the major Wisconsin crops. The right-hand side shows the percentage of the total amount of toxicity applied for each of these crop types.

20 million pounds annually

Based on USGS estimates, Wisconsin agriculture uses approximately 20 million pounds of pesticides annually. Among those applied to the state's top five crop types, herbicides are the most widely used (roughly 16 million pounds), followed by insecticides (three million pounds) and fungicides (one million pounds).

However, these figures do not include cranberry production, orchards, ginseng and specialty crops, or the vast quantities of pesticides applied to non-agricultural areas for forestry management, and on golf courses, lawns, gardens and urban green spaces, which also heavily impact Wisconsin's land and water resources.

Although tracking the location and quantity of pesticide applications helps identify potential environmental impacts, assessing a chemical's relative toxicity to non-target organisms—such as fish, aquatic plants and insects—provides a more accurate estimate of environmental risk.

To quantify this risk, researchers use a metric called Total Applied Toxicity (TAT). TAT is calculated by dividing the estimated quantity of a pesticide applied by its chronic or acute toxicity threshold (the concentration at which aquatic life is impacted, derived from laboratory toxicology tests) for specific aquatic plant or animal species. Depending upon whether the pesticide is an herbicide, insecticide or fungicide, its toxicity to aquatic plants or animals can differ significantly.

Insecticides tend to be more toxic to aquatic insects, and herbicides are more toxic to aquatic macrophytes and algae. Figure 2 above shows on the left-hand side of the plot the percentage of the state's total cropland used for the major Wisconsin crops. The right-hand side shows the percentage of the total amount of toxicity applied in the state for each of these crop types.

As examples, the acres of corn planted in Wisconsin each year is around 52 percent of the state's total cropland area. The total amount of toxicity from the quantities and toxicities of the herbicides, insecticides and fungicides is estimated to be 26 percent. Conversely, vegetable crops occupy a little more than two percent of the state's cropland but contribute 27 percent of the annual toxicity given larger numbers and quantities of more toxic pesticides used.

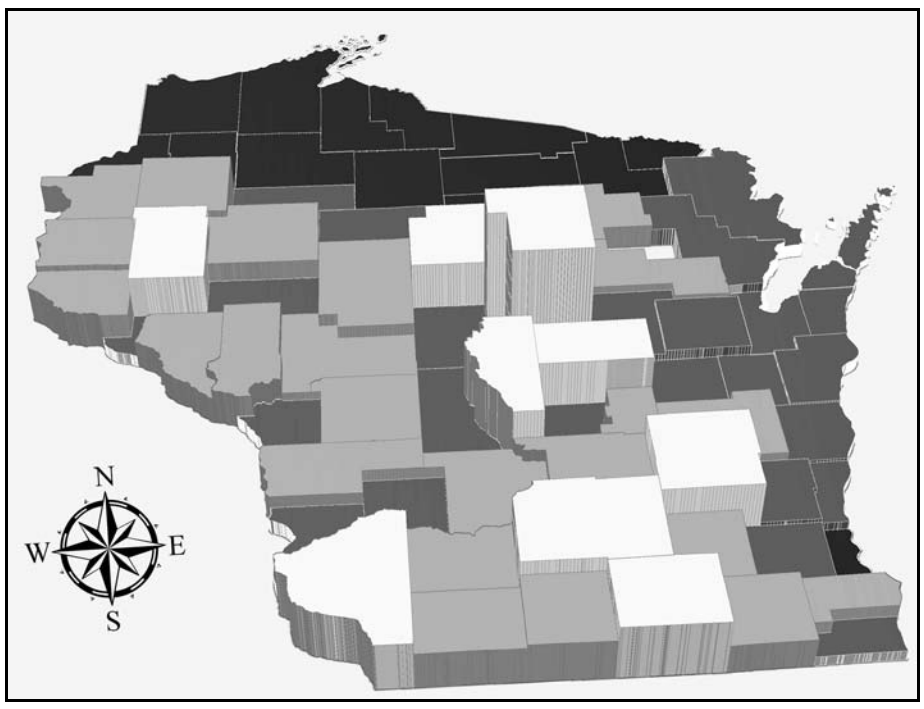
Consider how two different pesticides affect aquatic insects in Wisconsin. Each year, growers apply approximately 1.3 million pounds of the herbicide atrazine, primarily to corn and vegetable crops, compared to just 21,500 pounds of the insecticide imidacloprid.

Based on quantity alone, atrazine appears to pose a much greater risk because 60 times more of it enters the environment each year. However, factoring in chemical toxicity completely flips this conclusion. Atrazine is acutely toxic (causes death) in aquatic insects at a water column concentration of 360 parts per million (ppm), whereas imidacloprid is acutely toxic at 0.38 ppm—making imidacloprid nearly 1,000 times more potent. When accounting for both the quantities of pesticides used and their respective toxicities, imidacloprid's actual toxic threat to aquatic insects is roughly 16 times greater than that of atrazine.

I summed the Total Applied Toxicity for all agricultural pesticides used in each of 71 Wisconsin counties (data was not available for Menominee County) and plotted them in what is called an Extrusion Plot, where the greater relative TAT for a county the taller the height of the county shape (Figure 3). The lighter shading also illustrates the greater the county's TAT and darker shading a lower relative TAT.

Researchers can further refine these risk models by accounting for environmental persistence (half-lives) and how readily organisms absorb the chemicals (bioavailability). While numerous pesticides often co-occur in waterways, the cumulative effects of these chemical mixtures is relatively unknown. Finally, these relative risk profiles change dramatically depending on the target organism, as toxicity thresholds vary widely among invertebrates, fish and aquatic plants.

I am currently using this TAT methodology and additional information on pesticides' longevity and fate in the environment to help improve our understanding of which of



TOTAL APPLIED TOXICITY BY COUNTY
Extrusion Plot, where the greater relative TAT for a county the taller the height of the county shape (Figure 3). The lighter shading also illustrates the greater the county's TAT and darker shading a lower relative TAT.

the 100+ pesticides detected in Wisconsin's streams and rivers likely pose the greatest risks to the state's surface waters and will report on these findings in the Winter issue of Wisconsin Trout.

Assessing pesticides in Wisconsin streams and rivers

Beginning in 2022, with support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), I conducted a statewide survey of pesticide concentrations in Wisconsin's streams and rivers. We randomly selected 100 stream and river sites, sampling each once between May and September.

To investigate the influence of land use, the sites were selected from watershed groups dominated by one of four different land use categories: vegetable cropping, corn or soybean production, low-intensity urban "green spaces" or an "Other" category representing watersheds with generally less human disturbance from the previous three land-use classes. Water samples were analyzed for approximately 375 different pesticides or compounds some of these chemicals transform into when released into the environment.

Key findings:

Universal presence: Multiple pesticides were detected in each of the 100 streams and rivers sampled, including sites in forest-dominated watersheds in northern Wisconsin.

Many different pesticides: A total of 133 different pesticides including herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and plant growth regulators, (or transformation compounds) were identified.

Numerous compounds at each site: On average, 28 different pesticides were detected at individual sites, with a minimum of nine compounds and a maximum of 89.

Neonicotinoids were prevalent: They were detected at 84 percent of the survey sites.

Land use was influential: Pesticide contamination was closely tied to land use. Watersheds dominated by vegetable production and corn and soybean cropping showed the highest number and greatest concentrations of pesticides in streams and rivers, followed by urban sites where turf management and other types of pesticides are applied.

Extensive ecological risk: Study results indicate that neonicotinoids reach concentrations toxic to aquatic insects in thousands of miles of Wisconsin's flowing waters. Effects of other pesticides detected during this survey are still being evaluated.

Neonicotinoids and Pyrethroids

Researchers and citizens are increasingly focusing on neonicotinoid, sometime referred to as "neonics," and for good reason. These synthetic versions of nicotine are relatively inexpensive, widely used, highly persistent in the environment, water-soluble, and are "broad-spectrum" in that they are equally toxic to both beneficial aquatic and terrestrial insect species as they are to pest species.

Because they are water soluble, neonics are extremely mobile in the environment and routinely detected in Wisconsin's ground and surface waters. While nicotine acts as a mild stimulant in humans, it typically causes paralysis and death in insects. Neonics are extremely toxic to aquatic and terrestrial insects. Five-billionth of a gram (0.000000005 grams) of any of the five major neonic compounds used in the state is enough to kill a honeybee. Scaled up, a quantity of neonics the size of a sugar granule can kill roughly 125,000 bees, while a sugar packet's worth (about 3 to 4 grams) can poison 600 million bees.

According to USGS pesticide estimates, Wisconsin applies approximately 180,000 pounds of neonicotinoids annually for agricultural purposes, primarily through crop seeds treated prior to planting. Total usage for non-agricultural purposes remains largely unknown

Dozens of rigorous, peer-reviewed scientific studies, including research from the University of Wisconsin, indicate that neonicotinoid-treated seeds increase crop yields only about five percent of the time for corn or soybean producers. This lack of benefit stems from three primary factors:

- Low pest pressure: Initial pest densities often are not high enough to warrant pesticide treatment.
- Environmental runoff: Up to 90 percent of the chemical washes off the seeds shortly after planting rather than being absorbed by the crop plants.
- Rapid dilution: As the crop plants grow, the concentration of neonicotinoids in the plants dilute, leaving the crops unprotected later in the season when pest populations may reach densities of concern.

Because neonics offer little demonstrated benefit to many farmers and cause harm to the environment, the only true beneficiary is the chemical industry. Notably, Bayer, the world's largest manufacturer of neonicotinoids, is headquartered in Germany—a country that, along with the rest of the European Union, bans the outdoor use of neonics. Yet, this and other companies continue to aggressively market these insecticides in North and South America, and Africa.

Pyrethroid insecticides used in homes and gardens are another class of pesticides that warrant much greater attention. They're synthetic versions of pyrethrin insecticides produced by chrysanthemum flowers.

As a way of "green-washing" their products, some pesticide manufacturers show pictures of chrysanthemums on their packaging to associate them with nature. In reality, these chemical are some of the most toxic pesticides ever produced and are highly toxic to aquatic insects (particularly mayflies) and fish, in addition to terrestrial insects, amphibians and domestic cats.

EPA maintains a database on the toxicity of more than 700 pesticides and transformation compounds. Nine of the top 10 most toxic pesticides to aquatic insects are pyrethroids.

Compared to neonicotinoids, pyrethroids are used in less quantities in and break down more quickly in the environment. However, certain pyrethroids pose a significant threat to aquatic life. For example, bifenthrin, a pyrethroid increasingly detected at levels of concern in Wisconsin stream sediments, is roughly 300 times more toxic to aquatic insects than imidacloprid, a highly toxic neonic.

Because pyrethroids chemically bind to soil, stream sediment and particles in the water column, they settle on riverbeds or drift downstream. This accumulation can create a toxic environment for bottom-dwelling fish and aquatic insects like mayflies, caddisflies and many insect larvae that feed on drifting or settled particulates.

In the next issue I will report on how some states have restricted or banned the use of neonics and other pesticides so Wisconsin water resource advocates can strategize on how to more effectively address pesticide management in the state.





Thanks to volunteer camp photographers Mark Hoffman, Doug Nelson and Bob Haase, we have plenty of images to share from this year's Youth Camp. To see all the photos from this year's camp, go to the Council website at wicouncil.tu.org. There is also a video from this year's camp. Check it out.

Teaching Me a Master Class

Instructor: Dad



SURVIVORS OF THE ILL-FATED BOUNDARY WATERS TRIP
Dad is on the right in the front row, and I am left of him. Unfortunately, I have forgotten the names of the other scouts in this photograph. If you recognize yourself, please reach out.

By Leo Tramm

There's a particular brand of retrospective humility that settles into a man's bones only after the dust has had a few decades to gather on his tackle. For the longest time, I had my father, Werner, filed away under the heading of "Lawn-Chair Philosopher." To my recently acquired "fly fisherman"-colored eyes, he was a practitioner of the sedentary arts—a man content to plant himself in a folding chair with a spinning rod, a baited hook and a cold beer, watching the world drift by with the patient, unblinking focus of a snapping turtle. I figured him for a rough-fish man, someone who viewed fishing as a delivery system for a quiet afternoon away from his three sons rather than a pursuit of high art.

But memory is a funny thing; it's rarely as accurate as a well-balanced fly rod, and it usually requires a bit of cleaning to see the grain underneath.

A few years back, after the old man had finally cashed in his chips, my brother Paul and I found ourselves engaged in that hollow, quiet and strangely sacred business of clearing out the family garage. It's a task that forces you to confront the physical remnants of a life, and in the dim light of that cluttered space, we unearthed my old metal tackle box—heavy with the kind of scrounged lures that only a kid with more time than money can accumulate—and a rack of his rods.

There they were: several old fiberglass sticks by South Bend and Shakespeare, leaning against the wall like retired soldiers. Attached to them were those "automatic" fly reels—heavy, spring-loaded contraptions with a lever that, when squeezed, would snap the line back with a mechanical clatter loud enough to startle every bird within a three-mile radius. We found an old Oberlin Bait Canteen, smelling faintly of damp moss and earth, and a Townsend Fish Skinner, a tool that looks more like a medieval torture device than something you'd use on a bluegill. Seeing that gear was like opening a heavy door I'd forgotten was even there.

Dad was a Renaissance man, though not the kind who gets his name in the glossy textbooks. He was a trained watchmaker, an epicurean, a winemaker, leather crafter, a carver, and a stained-glass artist. He was a man who understood the intricate clockwork of things.

Life hadn't exactly been a picnic for him. He grew up in a precision-run, first-generation German household where the standing order was to outdo your parents—a grueling sort of generational marathon that was simply the norm in our house. As we rooted through his belongings in the house, we found a small, plastic hospital bracelet and learned, for the first time, that we'd had an older brother who was stillborn. Later, Dad would have to endure the unnatural grief of losing his youngest son, Charles—or Charlie, or Chuck, as our brother's name evolved like a shifting current—until he lost the battle with esophageal cancer at the young age of thirty-four.

By the time Dad hit forty, a savage combination of severe plaque psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis had robbed him of the steady, surgical hands required for watchmaking. Yet, somehow, the weight of all that loss and the betrayal of his own body never seemed to sour his spirit or dull his appetite for the outdoors. I never would have admitted it while he was still around—mostly because sons are historically bad at giving their fathers credit—but he taught me just about everything that actually matters: curiosity, the quiet joy of learning a new craft, and the stubborn attitude required to live life at full tilt, regardless of the weather.

Paul and I started trading stories as we hauled boxes into the light. We remembered the nameless rivers and creeks we'd scout from a patch of land Dad bought near Baraboo. We'd park just past a bridge—as all good expeditions begin—and devore a shore lunch of summer sausage, sharp cheddar cheese, and maybe some buttered bread. Once the tradition of the "family meal" was out of the way, we were cut loose to roam like feral goats.

We came of age on the Wisconsin River, or "Out West," as we called it, pitching tents or, later, a pop-up camper at Snuffy' s Campground. We spent our nights chasing white bass and catfish off the sandbars or hanging around the Eureka Dam Campsite (a place that earned its damn name) where the gar fish lurked in the shadows, looking like prehistoric nightmares left over from a different geological era.

Our preparation for these outings was a science in itself. We'd hunt nightcrawlers by putting the sprinkler on the garden after dark, filling the Bait Canteen with enough worms to satisfy a legion of panfish. We chased frogs during "Wine Club" meetings—gatherings of grown men that seemed to involve a lot of loud laughter and mysterious liquids. I still remember the long, hazy drives home from those meetings, and the forbidden, slightly dizzying feeling you'd get after sneaking a few "leftovers" from the glasses.

Dad was our Scoutmaster, a title that carried a certain weight, though looking back, I'm still not entirely sure how he managed to squeeze that many backpacking trips and canoe treks out of a City of Milwaukee employee's vacation package. He belonged to that old, rugged school of thought that believed a man should be able to live off the land and water, even if the "land" in question offered up things that looked more like bait than dinner.

For me, the pinnacle of this philosophy was a week-long push into the Boundary Waters of Minnesota. He sent me up a week early, a sort of advance-man or scout-for-the-scouts, tasked with mastering the dark arts of compass navigation, first aid and foraging. The idea was that if the troop found itself a hundred miles into the bush with nothing but a map, a week's rations, and their own wits, I was the one who was supposed to keep us from starving.

As it turned out, the real threat wasn't the wilderness; it was my father's "backpack chicken."

The recipe was simple and, in hindsight, medically questionable: you took a bird, stuffed it with hot rocks from the morning fire, wrapped the whole mess in a cocoon of foil and newspaper, and shoved it into a pack to slow-cook against your spine during the heat of the day. By the time we made camp, the cargo smelled wonderful, but the results were catastrophic. Before the sun rose the next morning, half the troop—myself included, suffering from a certain intestinal crisis had learned the hard way that there are some things even a compass and a merit badge can't fix.

There was a family cottage, too—though "cottage" is a generous term for a vintage trailer grafted onto a small shack with no running water and a fuel-oil furnace that smelled of old winters. It sat on a lake near Crivitz, and the summer weekends there were defined by the scent of that fuel oil and the particular, musty aroma of those old orange life preservers stored in the outhouse—smells that, to a young boy, were the very definition of summer.

Nana the fishing instructor

At the cottage, fishing lessons were administered by Dad's mother, who us boys referred to as Nana. She'd been raised on a farm near Fond du Lac, which meant she viewed fishing not as a hobby, but as a fundamental part of a life well-lived.

As she had done with Dad before we came along, Nana walked us through the entire evolution of the sport. We started with cane poles at the end of the dock, graduated to throwing hardware from a paddle boat and eventually—once she felt we'd earned it—she took us to the Thunder River. That was her favorite trout water, and if you have a grandmother who has a favorite trout stream, you listen to what she has to say. In her later years, she'd just sit at the end of the dock in a chair, watching us fish into the evening with the kind of patience only an old angler truly possesses.

Nana had a standing order that we weren't to take the boat out alone, a



NANA WITH TWO HEFTY BLACK BASS
In this photo of Nana from the 1930s, Nana shows off two nice largemouth bass, or black bass, as would know them.



THE ONLY PHOTOGRAPH I COULD FIND OF DAD WITH FISH
i'm holding Dad's catch – the biggest of the day. My wife Karen is behind me. Unfortunately, this would be the last Lake Michigan charter organized by my brother Chuck, before his cancer diagnosis.

command we naturally viewed as a polite suggestion rather than a rule. At the time, I'll admit I was frequently distracted. The girls from the neighboring cabin were far more interesting than the local panfish and I spent a considerable amount of time at the end of the dock; my rod pointed toward their cabin with a focus that had nothing to do with fish.

Our oldest cousin David still tells the story of a fishing trip where Dad managed to break his leg. David, who was all of fifteen at the time, had to take the wheel and drive the family car to get help—his very first time behind the wheel, necessitated by our father who wasn't about to let a fractured bone get in the way of a return to fishing. Before Dad had sons, he and David were a pair of amateur naturalists, doing the kind of wild things people do when they spend too much time in the woods, like raising rabbits for meat and pelts, and building homemade fish tanks, presumably so they could study the enemy in their spare time.

We spent those years around Crivitz, a corner of the world where the geography can best be described as plumbing. With six hundred miles of trout streams and lakes too numerous to count, Dad wanted to experience every inch of it. David would go fly fishing with him on the Peshtigo River, just south of Popp's Resort, while my brothers and I would go clamming with him on the same stretch of river. It wasn't always a gentle pastoral scene; when the dams opened, the river could turn mean in a hurry. My brother, going by the name Charlie at the time, once found himself chest-deep and fading fast before the rest of us realized the river had grown teeth.

Dad had a peculiar habit of frying up those clams for dinner—a gesture of culinary optimism that I'm not sure was ever entirely rewarded—but the real work happened afterward. He'd take those shells and turn them into canvases. He'd paint elaborate Northwoods scenes on them: pine trees, water, birds in flight. He would even build up layers of paint in the hinge of the shell to sculpt an eagle, its wings spreading out along the perimeter to hold the whole scene together.

Going through his things in the house later, Paul and I found those shells tucked away in corners of the house along with his bird carvings. We boxed them up, sending some to family and keeping a few for ourselves—small reminders of a man who couldn't sit still.

Standing there again in the garage, looking at those old fiberglass fly rods, it finally clicked. For years, I figured we were just out there pestering bluegills and wasting daylight. But standing there in the quiet, I realized he'd been running a master class all along. He wasn't just showing us how to bait a hook; he was showing us how to tie a life together so the knots would hold when things got complicated. He wasn't teaching us how to fish; he was teaching us how to be.

He wasn't just showing us how to bait a hook; he was showing us how to tie a life together so the knots would hold when things got complicated.

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 is about the most influential angler in my life – Dad! I've met my share of experts and more than a few philosophers, but none of them ever managed to say as much as my dad did while simply watching a bobber from a folding chair.

We never had a "meaning of it all" talk—or even a "birds-and-the-bees" talk, for that matter—but the essentials don't really require words. He taught me how to lose a big fish with some measure of dignity, which is probably more important anyway. You eventually realize that the people who shape you the most aren't the ones who give you the map, but the ones who taught you how to enjoy being lost.

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.





Last call for the hoppers of fall

Two of our favorite fishing writers give us their take on the what makes Driftless Area fall hopper fishing like nothing else in the world.

By Peter Jonas

I know that fall is a great time to go out west, but there is nowhere I would rather be than the Driftless Area during September and October. Why? Because hopper fishing provides a unique opportunity to hook a large trout on a dry fly during daytime hours.

The most important thing a beginner can do to have a better day hopper fishing is to fish fast and cover a lot of water. If you are exhausted when you get back to your car, you are probably on the right track.

Because a hopper is a big meal, fish will move to go and get it. This means you don't have to cover every microcurrent seam like you would with a size 18 dry fly. In a wide stretch of stream I throw one cast to each bank, one to the middle, and then I move forward.

Most takes are reactive

Sure, once in a while you will see a fish drift behind a hopper and inspect it before either taking or refusing. But most hopper takes are reactive. The fly hits the water and then bam!

Usually hoppers trigger an immediate yes-or-no response from trout. And "no" really does mean "no." Drifting that fly over the fish five more times won't do either of you any good.

Now that I've hurried you up, you still have to watch where you are wading. Good size trout will hold in unlikely places during terrestrial season because the areas of the stream where insects are prone to fall in the water are different from the areas where fish can maximize their take of aquatic insects.

Plus, overhanging grass dramatically increases the area of the stream that has overhead protection from predators. This means trout will hold in some weird places, like the tail out of a pool where grass provides cover and the current running into the bank creates a bit of a cushion, or the off current side of the steam because….well…who knows why?

It is inevitable that you will spook and nearly step on fish while you are hopper fishing. It happens, so don't beat yourself up over it. Just keep in mind that you are fishing for trout that are in ambush mode. If you have a hunch or a good feeling about a spot, dump a cast there. If nothing happens, keep moving.

Many anglers abandon areas high in the watershed once the grass gets super high in the summer. Narrower streams can be tough or nearly impossible to fish, but they can also be highly productive, and you won't have much company. My final tip is that you can catch a lot of nice trout in tight spots by blind casting or casting over grass.

Let's say there is a sharp bend in the stream in front of you and the grass is tall enough so you can't see what is around the corner. Here is where a blind cast is called for.

"Guestimate" where the stream is around the corner, cast and listen for the sound of a take. If you get a fish, or the fly floats to a place where you see it, you know you hit water. You will inevitably spend some time with your fly stuck in the grass, but when it hits water, it can really pay off.

Tight quarters. Big trout.

In narrow streams, it is not uncommon for the grass on each side of the bank to get so tall that it bends and meets over the stream. I used to concede these areas and walk through to open water, but I have spooked so many big trout in these spots, I became determined to figure out how to fish them.

Sometimes there is a narrow window of open space you can attempt to shoot a fly through. Working on your casting accuracy helps here, but this is a very low percentage move. There is always that one blade of grass that reaches out and grabs your fly.

A slightly higher percentage move is to look and see if there is a little pocket of open water just upstream of the place where the grass meets. Often there is. I have found that casting over the top of where the grass meets and trying to land my hopper in the open water beyond the grass is a little easier than trying to shoot through a very narrow gap. Occasionally the fly line will fall gently through the grass to the water, making an impossible drift possible.

Time for the heavy tippet

You will land many flies on the bank attempting this. This is one of the reasons I use outrageously heavy tippet during hopper season. Sometimes you will stick so many flies in the grass that you will send the trout scurrying away because they are not used to seeing the grass on their bank suddenly fly away.



Phil Porter

LARGE TROUT DURING THE DAY ON DRIES? THAT'S HOPPER FISHING. The most important thing a beginner can do to have a better day hopper fishing is to fish fast and cover a lot of water. If you are exhausted when you get back to your car, you are probably on the right track.

You also need to be emotionally prepared to try this cast. If you cast 5-6 times without hitting water, you may begin to think about breaking your fly rod over your knee. I recommend you immediately stop casting, take a deep breath, remind yourself that this is supposed to be fun, concede the hole and wade through.

Just don't be surprised to see a massive trout bolt upstream. My standards may be low, but when my fly rod lives to fight another day, I call that a successful day on the water.

If you do hook a big trout in a ridiculously narrow slot, you are likely in for some chaos. Now you have to figure out how to get it back through all that overhanging grass and the bankside root complexes on either side.

Good luck with that, because more things can go wrong than can go right. But the adrenaline rush that comes along with that chaos is one of the things that makes fishing the Driftless Area in the fall the best time and place to be fishing.

Peter Jonas is president of the Wisconsin Clear Waters Chapter.



Peter Jonas

BECAUSE A HOPPER IS A BIG MEAL, FISH WILL MOVE TO GO AND GET IT

Nothing quite like it

The "picturesque compactness"of a tiny stream makes for some exciting late-season hopper fishing.

By Phil Porter

The seeds for this article germinated piecemeal in the field during several wonderful late summer days of trout fishing in Western Wisconsin. It was hopper season, or more generically, terrestrial season in the Driftless Area.

Although there still may be time to get out in early October, you are likely reading this with prime grasshopper season a fading memory. But hopefully it is still close enough in the rear-view mirror to allow you to reminisce with me. The transience of the season increases the longing each year. Depending on the weather, we may only get 4-6 good weeks.

The average fish runs 8-11 inches, while a good fish might be a 13-inch brookie or 15-inch brown, which may not be impressive in more famous trout-fishing regions.

But I would put my blissful summer days in Wisconsin up against any other trout experience I've had around the world. Pulling relatively large trout out of tiny water with a 15-foot cast is a special experience. What it lacks in grandeur, it makes up for in picturesque compactness.

I'm talking about very small creeks, meandering through pastures with banks lined by tall grass and wildflowers. The intimate nature of the experience is a large part of what makes it so appealing. There is no guide and no drift boat, as there's no room for anything on the stream but you.

Despite the constrained spaces, you can put away the tiny dry flies of earlier in the season and stop fussing with 5x or 6x tippet for delicate delivery. Now is the time for heavier artillery including 3x or 4x leader and tippet and big foam bugs that smack the water like their real-life correlates do. For your wading, however, stealth is key as you move through the cold, clear water, sometimes in areas so narrow that you must brush aside the overgrown grasses just to move upstream. You can fish it from land, which brings its own set of challenges, but I find that immersing yourself in the fish's environment is part of the allure.

A wide section of creek might be 10 feet across, a narrow one less than zero, depending on how you measure it, such as when there is no open space between overhanging grass blades. This means you are essentially "tight to the banks" on every cast, which is often-heard advice. You aren't airing out elegant, tight-looped 40-foot casts. You need to be creative, using up-casts and roll-casts and loading your line with the downstream current, just to stay out of the weeds and get your offering far enough upstream that the fish haven't spooked.

Speaking of spooking, synchronizing the time of day that you fish to when the real terrestrial critters have warmed up and start hitting the water often means fishing around mid-day, so pray for some cloud cover.

Cast - catch grass - rip hopper out - cast - grass again - rip - cast - smack down between the grasses, the line bending the blades to create a lane where there really isn't one, finally getting your hopper to hit water, where it is instantly devoured by the explosive take of an opportunistic trout 10-15 feet in front of you. At this point, you need to promptly pull the fish downstream through the lane before it tangles you in the vegetation and gets off. I'm not trying to claim it compares to a 100-pound tarpon grabbing a fly at 50 feet on an expansive saltwater flat, but I do think the close range and narrowed visual angle of a skinny stream do amplify the perceived violence of the eat.



Phil Porter

EXPECT YOUR FLIES TO SNAG PLENTY OF GRASS.
And do your best to control the frustration. It's supposed to be fun, right?

Observing the take is a big part of the thrill. At times, you will see a "V" in the water as a fish cruises downstream to your fly, or you'll get to watch the trout appear from under the overhanging grass and swim, sometimes like a bolt and other times with surprising nonchalance, to inhale your offering, amazingly and fortunately oblivious to your presence due to it being locked on to a sizeable package of protein. In these tight quarters you can also use tricks such as casting around a bend or over obstructive vegetation that conceals your presence. It's a thrill to lose visual contact with your fly and wait in anticipation for the splash as your auditory clue to set the hook.

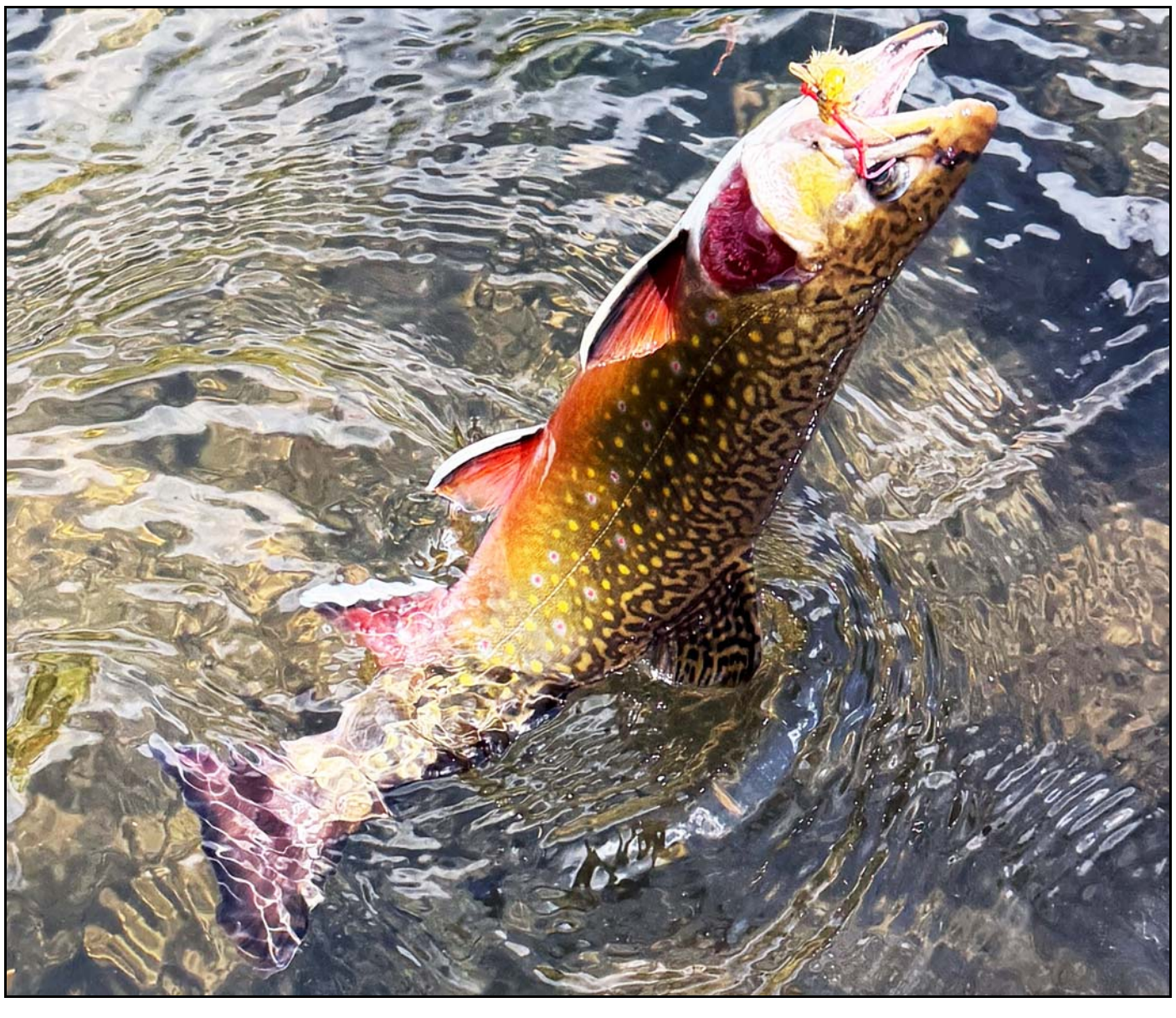
I once thought it was important to catch a grasshopper or two to match their size and colors, but after running out of carefully-selected flies several times, I realized that a cricket, bumblebee, ant or beetle imitation will often work just as well. When the trout are tuned in to looking up and waiting for that "splat" from the bank, I've found that they generally aren't too picky, at least with the current levels of fishing pressure on these tiny waters.

Lest I make this sound too idyllic, nobody is handing it to you out there. While on land, you will sometimes be ploughing through dense grasses towering above your head, knocking clouds of pollen from flowers straight into your sinuses. Getting in and out of the steeply banked creek, which might actually start several feet back from where you think it does, can be a death-defying move, and as you do so you will be dodging thistles and stinging nettles.

Sometimes the slack water of the deeper pools is quite silty, so when you are already over your waist in water you also slowly ooze down into six inches of muck that acts like suction cups on your feet. Those casts that do hang up on shore may necessitate picking your hopper out of toxic giant hogweed. Unless you're way better at fly fishing than I am, there will be stretches when you get caught in the grass more often than not, which can allow frustration to creep in.

But it's not all bad. Occasionally teasing your tangled line and fly out from dried vegetation such as seed heads can be a decent desiccant for a foam fly that is starting to get waterlogged from too many takes. Also on the up-side, as you do all of this you will be distracted by the aerial acrobatics of hummingbirds and butterflies and be serenaded by wrens, common yellowthroats, song sparrows and killdeer in close proximity, overdubbed with the soundtrack of buzzing pollinators and, of course, the subtle movement through the grass of the very hoppers that you are here trying to imitate.

This kind of fishing isn't for everyone, but if you enjoy solitude, are willing to work for your strikes, and see the fishing experience as so much more than catching, I think you'll agree that hopper season in the Driftless Area is a unique opportunity that we are fortunate to have on tap each year.



Phil Porter

Another wonderful look back

Council's annual Youth Fishing Camp continues its successful tradition.

Even though the headline sounds like the camp went off without any hiccups, we did have an odd year. In the last couple of years, we have been running flush with volunteer mentors and that is the way we started this year.

Unfortunately for some of the volunteers, life caught up with them and they weren't able to make it, but fortunately we had enough adult mentors that each camper had a mentor.

One great thing that has always been a blessing for the camp is our junior mentors, who did a stellar job this year. With some of the adult mentors presenting programs and mentoring, the junior mentors help pick up any slack. They helped the campers during the programs, which helped them run smoothly.

We enjoyed a great Saturday morning with the DNR and Central Wisconsin Chapter for the chapter workday. The DNR habitat crew led by Shawn Sullivan did another wonderful job of explaining habitat work. Then Scott Bunde and his crew did a stream-shocking presentation. After the stream work, the chapter treated everyone to pizza. Thank you to Laura Tucker, Mike Northam and the Central Wisconsin Chapter.

Our Sunday morning fishing started with overcast skies and some of the campers even heard a little thunder, but everyone stayed dry. Most importantly, there were trout and chubs caught, and all had a great time.

A huge thank you goes out to the chapters that sponsored campers. All the campers were great and represented their chapters well. While we are thanking people, a big hand of recognition goes out to our adult and junior mentors, and our presenters. The job all of you did this year was exceptional, greatly appreciated and crucial to the camp's.

A very big part of the youth camp is the swag we're all able to collect for the students. We try to put together a nice bag for their arrival. We also hold drawings throughout the weekend with gently used items donated by chapters or members and supplemented by some items that we purchase. This year an anonymous donor provided zingers, hemostats and a new fly rod for all the campers. All this generosity really helped make a special weekend for the campers. Please think about donating to the 2027 Youth Camp, as all and any items would be appreciated.

Thank you to the Youth Camp Committee members for your hard work all year long. You all put together a fantastic camp.

We are looking for several members to join us on the Youth Camp committee and help us as we improve and take the camp forward. As in anything, fresh thoughts and ideas will make the camp more productive and enjoyable for our campers. Please reach out to me at any point if you are interested.

The 2027 Youth Camp will be August 19-22, with open enrollment beginning February 1, 2027.

By Council Youth Camp Director Linn Beck. A founder of the Youth Fishing Camp, Linn is a former Chapter President, Council Chair, NLC Rep and is currently a national Trout Unlimited Trustee.

To see more photos from this year's camp, go to the Council website at wicouncil.tu.org. There is also a video from this year's camp. Check it out.

Thank you to our wonderful camp photographers: Mark Hoffman, Doug Nelson and Bob Haase.













Iowa's Spring Branch Creek to be protected, restored

By Cameron "Cam" Aker, TUDARE Iowa Engagement Coordinator

Tucked away near Manchester, Iowa flows a stream that is special to anyone who's fished it. In fact, this stream and surrounding property are so special that the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) is purchasing a property on which it runs through and permanently preserving it for the public to enjoy. Through the 202-acre property flows three quarters of mile of Spring Branch Creek, which supplies all the water for the Manchester Fish Hatchery. The stream hosts native brook trout, wild brown trout, stocked rainbow trout and mottled sculpin populations.



PERMANENTLY PRESERVED AND PROTECTED
The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is purchasing property on Iowa's Spring Branch Creek for the public to enjoy.

INHF is currently raising funds for the acquisition of the property and has raised nearly 70 percent of its $250,000 goal.

Once enough funds have been raised to fully protect it, Trout Unlimited is planning a restoration project. The project will focus on repairing gullies in the surrounding upland areas that contribute sediment to the stream and installing habitat features that will help the stream heal itself, while providing critical habitat for trout.

The surrounding former pasture will also be managed for grassland and oak savanna wildlife species. Restoring these parts of the adjacent watershed will help to increase pollinator habitat and improve water, quality among other benefits.

Once this is completed, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will work to increase brook trout densities. Stocked rainbow trout are only present in the downstream section and that portion will continue to be home to all three trout species.

If you or your local TU chapter would like to donate to this project, you can learn more at this website: www.inhf.org/what-we-do/protection/springbranch



GOT YOUR TU PLATES YET?
Go to dot.state.wi.us/drivers/vehicles/personal/special/trout.htm

FOX VALLEY TROUT UNLIMITED
CABIN FEVER DAY
Saturday, January 30, 2027 • 10 am - 4 pm
Fox Cities Exhibition Center • Appleton, WI
• Exhibitors
• Guest Speakers
• Conservation Partners
• Bucket Raffles
• 50/50 Raffle
• Silent Auction
• Used Equipment/Book Sale
• Fly Tyers
• Fly Casting
• Food Available on Site
Fox Valley TROUT UNLIMITED
ONLINE
TU.MYEVENTSCENTER.COM
TICKETS
OR
AT THE DOOR
AVAILABLE AT THE EVENT
FOXVALLEYTU.ORG/CABIN-FEVER-DAY

Chapter News

Aldo Leopold Chapter

The summer of 2026 was busy for the members of the Aldo Leopold Chapter. In addition to our successful annual summer picnic, our members were active in selling our chapter's custom coffee blend, which supports our efforts. We volunteered at the Wisconsin Women's Flyfishing Clinics and the Council's Youth Camp.

Our members, leadership and community are staying vigilant and informed on the projects that could harm our people and watersheds, including the Meta Data Center in Beaver Dam, the proposed 765 kV line in Southern Wisconsin and the use of neonicotinoids (neonics) in agriculture.

Do you have any questions about data centers, the high voltage transmission lines, neonics, or simply want to share some multimedia, please reach out to alderforkjournal@gmail.com. Please stay tuned for our winter fly-tying events on facebook.com/aldoleopoldtu or check out our latest newsletter at simplebooklet.com/alderforkjournalsummer2026.

—Matthew Duffy



2026 COUNCIL YOUTH CAMP ATTENDEES AT THE CWTU WORK DAY



BEN HLABEN POINTING OUT TROUT REDDS TO VOLUNTEERS IN TRAINING

Antigo Chapter

The Antigo Chapter hopes everyone had a great and safe summer. We were happy to be a part of a June work day with other chapters from our region. We helped provide and cook the lunch for the work crew that day. It's always great to get together with other chapters, see old friends and meet new ones.

During the trout fishing season our members patrol and clean out the waste-line boxes that we placed at access points for fishing line and other fishing debris. The system is working well and keeps line waste out of the streams and ponds.

Our chapter will again provide three $500 scholarships to local high school students. Meanwhile, our chapter proudly paid the fuel-oil bill again for the DNRs' spring-pond dredging program this summer.

Our biggest project this past summer was building and placing a new fishing dock at Garski's flowage. Nearly a dozen members showed up when it was time to place the structure in the water. Many hands helped the work go well. We placed a Leopold-style bench on the dock for sitting and appreciating the beautiful surroundings. It also features a new line-disposal box.

We will be placing new wood chips on a kayak path off of River Road on the East Branch of the Eau Claire River.

—Scott Henricks

Central Wisconsin Chapter

We had great attendance at our July Davies Creek work day as well as our September work day, which started at the DNR's Wild Rose facility and then proceeded to streams nearby.

Students and volunteers from the Council Youth Camp again joined us in August, this time at Davies Creek. In total, 68 individuals attended on what turned out to be a warm and sunny day. Fortunately we had a tent with tables and chairs to escape the sun.

The students learned about stream restoration. When the work was done they enjoyed a great lunch from Christiano's.

Shawn Sullivan, the Operations Team Manager with the Fisheries Department of the DNR, plans the workdays. He and his DNR Wild Rose Trout Management team volunteer their time to work with CWTU on workday Saturdays without pay.

Our workday coordinator Mike Northam works with the DNR to manage the workdays and he does an awesome job communicating about upcoming events. Tom Meyer and Chris Northway provide breakfast and drinks. Ira Geise brings the trailer with the supplies. Together they make the program a great success. We could not accomplish this program without their knowledge, advice, direction and help. A great shoreside lunch was served after working.

The August picnic on the Pine River, hosted by John and Laura Tucker, drew 45 members and featured great food and homemade pies.

Our River Keeper program, managed by Bob Jozwowski, now has 100 members, with 24 teams monitoring 36 streams in Central Wisconsin. The year-end Dinner Review and River Keeper of the Year Award is November 10 at the Waushara Country Club.

The DNR's redd survey training program is Saturday, October 31 at the Wild Rose Trout Management Facility. Steve DeVitt from the Wild Rose Trout Habitat Management Team manages the program. Redd counting and mapping training programs are collaborative efforts between the DNR and TU. Participants learn to find, identify and record redds.

A redd is an underwater nest or depression excavated in the gravel by a spawning female trout or salmon to deposit her eggs. By counting these spawning sites and documenting their location, stream health can be determined. Ben Hlaben from the Fox Valley Chapter and our member Mark Hoffman are the recruiters and "cheerleaders" who help make Steve DeVitt's DNR program successful. Our chapter will provide breakfast at the training event and the Fox Valley Chapter is providing lunch!

We recently held our Environmental Banquet and Fundraiser at the WWII Museum in Wautoma. This year honored the DNR Wild Rose Trout Habitat Management Crew.

Our monthly educational programs, which follow our board meetings, take place at the Winneconne Library.

Our September presentation featured Dr. Vince Catteruccia, who discussed how to preserve function and endurance from aging by fly fishing. The presentation was interactive and had our members moving around and learning techniques to "reclaim" or maintain their love of being active on the streams. The audience enjoyed his engaging exercise training stressing the need for correct technique and posture. Dr Catteruccia has also written a book called River Legs Forever; Build Hip Strength and Mobility after 50. He has granted TU and its members to use, distribute or adapt his information for non-commercial uses within the TU chapters. Many thanks for his enlightening presentation.

On October 14 Chris Firkus will discuss Priority Waters and the Mecan River Watershed, with tips for successful night fishing.

November 11 features Quinn Erdman's presentation entitled "Pass It On," which will discuss the mentoring program for hunting and fishing.

On December 9 Steve Nelson and Al Sanders will present "The Art of Music and Fly Fishing."

On January 13 Tom Lager will discuss everything we need to know about bugs.

January 22 is our IF-4 Fly Fishing Film night at the Communication Arts Center in Menasha (Previously the UW Fox Valley Performing Art Center Midway Road)

February 27 is our major annual event, TroutFest.

In March will be a chapter-hosted event including the Fox Valley,



CWTU MEMBERS LEARN TARGETED MOBILITY TRAINING EXERCISES

Chapter News

Frank Hornberg and Shaw-Paca chapters.

On April 14 Steve Heuser will discuss another fly-fishing adventure.

May 12 features Bob Haase and Wayne Parmley: The Night of Your Favorite Fly.

Our first ever International Fly Fishing Film Festival (IF4) events is Friday, Jan 22 at the Communication Arts Center in Menasha. Phil Sorensen is coordinating the event. Come and enjoy a night of socialization with lots of great information. The event will include some raffles to get you in the mood for the 2027 fishing season.

TroutFest will again be held at the Mount Morris Camp and Retreat Center on Saturday, February 27. This event attracts people from across the state to enjoy a winter day inside with speakers, vendors, fly tyers, slightly used equipment and multiple raffles.

As you can see, we're a very active TU chapter and new members are welcomed. There is something for all to contribute to make our chapter successful. Come see and enjoy.

—Laura Tucker



Deb Muresan

CUTIE SPORTING A COOL TROUTFEST TATTOO



Deb Muresan

TROUTFEST LIKELY HOOKED A FEW FUTURE ANGLERS

Coulee Region Chapter

As we wrap up our summer event season, we appreciate the fair weather we received for all our events, unlike most years.

Our summer event season started with TroutFest in Coon Valley. We stocked the stream with rainbows trout for the kids to catch. As a side note, we extend our best wishes to our long-time trout supplier, Herold Trout Farm, as the owners are retiring.

A special thank you also goes out to chapter member Bob Retko for again generously supplying bait for the event. We distributed our "I fished TroutFest with CRTU" t-shirts to more than 100 participants.

We also awarded door prizes via a drawing and there were fly rods flying as our team of casting experts helped everyone hone their skills.

Meanwhile, young participants were busy showing off small plastic boxes containing their latest creations at the fly-tying stations and some were sporting temporary tattoos of the TroutFest logo. We also hosted a session of "Creek Critters," because kids always like interacting with bugs.

Along with our board members, we had several volunteers join us at TroutFest. Thank you to Jeff Smith, Scott Lissen, Donna Smith, Paul Berger, Chris and Moe Amundson, and Elliott Sjoquist (returning for a third time to TroutFest).

In July we were at Pettibone Park for the Outdoor Youth Fest. We were assigned a prime spot with lots of foot traffic. Again, more than 100 families stopped at our exhibit to color trout pictures, tie flies, talk trout and cast fly rods for some good trout fun. Along with our board members, we send thanks to Cy Post, Paul Berger and others who spent time with us.

Another event that was very popular was a casting clinic hosted by chapter member Steve Miller. Steve is one of our FFI-certified casting instructors who also serves on our board of directors. On three evenings in June and July he hosted a public clinic. Unfortunately, either Mother Nature has a problem with providing good weather on Wednesdays or just likes messing with Steve. In a heroic attempt, we scheduled another three sessions in July with nearly the same result. There is much interest in the clinics, and we hope to be able to negotiate a date with the weather and offer them again next year.



Deb Muresan

COULEE REGION'S STREAMGIRLS LEARNING TO TIE FLIES



Deb Muresan

COULEE CHAPTER STREAMGIRLS CREATING CUSTOMIZED NAME BADGES

August featured our highly anticipated STREAMGirls event at the West Fork Sports Club (WFSC). Thank you to the WFSC for the great facility. This is a great day that helps the girls build confidence and explore science and the outdoors, while also creating art, making memories and having fun.

The first activity of the day is to create name tags, and they are all so creative. Thank you to Fred Spademan handling the supplies for this activity. The participants had a blast.

Along with fly casting, fly tying and creating a memory bracelet, the girls spent time in the stream learning entomology, stream flow calculations, environmental awareness, and of course, getting wet and cooling off. The water starts out cold, but is so refreshing. By the end of the day the girls earned their badges and certificates of completion and the dedicated team of chapter volunteers were pleasantly exhausted. Thank you to the board members in attendance along with Patti Fulton, Lauren Genske, Conner Smith, Marty Sellers and Al Sanders.

September featured a Trout Talk with the Silver Doctor himself, Bob Blumreich, a Driftless Area fishing legend.

On October 21 in Viroqua, the DNR's Kim Kuber will talk about the New Zealand mud snail threat.

November 18 is our Fish Science Talk in La Crosse. The River Studies Club will present their findings from summer research and further work on the Pammel Creek restoration.

Our holiday party is December 9, so watch for details, as we are revamping this event. On January 20 Fort McCoy Fishery Biologist Steve Rood will discuss the fort's fishery.

These events are open to the public and start at 6 p.m. with a social hour. Programming begins at 7 p.m. You can find out more about all of our events and activities by going to couleeregiontu.org facebook.com/couleetu. Join us if you can.

Chapter board members would like to acknowledge the tremendous work of Robert Hubbard as he has served on the chapter board for many years. Bob resigned from the board over the summer, and we are so grateful for his support, leadership and contributions. Tim Gander has graciously agreed to serve the remainder of Bob's term. This is also a great time to mention that the entire board is scheduled for election in January, so if you are thinking you would like to help make a difference in the Coulee Region, please contact the secretary-treasurer of the chapter at couleeregiontu@gmail.com and let us know of your interest.

—Deb Muresan

Chapter News

Fox Valley Chapter

Even though our chapter board takes the summer off to fish for trout, our members stayed active this past summer through youth education, conservation work days, stream monitoring and community outreach.

In June, members again represented us at the Outagamie County Fair. Volunteers taught spin and fly casting, offered "get your fingers wet" lessons about aquatic invertebrates, and helped guests tie flies. Intermittent showers disturbed the day, but between rain showers the casters were bustling with activity. During the rain events, the fly tyers and bug pickers sheltered under the tent. Regardless, the day remained busy and gave us a valuable opportunity to introduce visitors to coldwater conservation and trout fishing.

From May through September, chapter members volunteer alongside CWTU on habitat work days in Central Wisconsin. Because FVTU has no trout streams within its chapter boundaries, we appreciate the chance to help improve the waters many of us fish in the Central Sands area. Funds raised by our chapter also support work by Shawn Sullivan's DNR habitat crew.

Other FVTU volunteers spend time on streams each month through WAV monitoring. The data collected supports science-based stream management in Wisconsin. This year, at least six FVTU volunteers are dedicated to this important work.

FVTU volunteers were well represented at this year's Council Youth Fishing Camp. Thank you to Tom Lager, Ben Hlaban, Jim Pickart, Kathrine Yaeger, Doug Nelson, Jordan Horak and Tony Pudlo for helping make the camp a success.

We also appreciate the former campers who returned as mentors and junior mentors, including Grant Gabby, Ashton Wagner, Brett Horak and Cody Horak.

As summer gives way to fall, many of us look forward to FVTU's Autumn Angling Adventure. Crisp mornings, changing colors, lighter crowd, and time on the water remind us why we love fishing, and why clean, cold streams are worth protecting.

This year's trip was in September in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, including a chapter meeting at Dark Waters Fly Shop in Iron River and the presentation of our Traveling Angling Adventure Trophy. This event is about more than catching fish. Members fish, explore, tie flies, learn new techniques, share stories, and enjoy time with fellow conservationists. Whether you're experienced or new to fly fishing, you'll find a welcoming group ready to help make the trip enjoyable.

That fellowship is part of what makes FVTU special. We come from different backgrounds and experience levels, but share an appreciation for clean, cold water, trout habitat, conservation, outdoor adventure and lasting friendships. Every cast connects us to the year-round conservation work that protects healthy trout streams. Habitat projects, stream restoration, youth education and volunteer service help ensure future generations can enjoy the same cold-water resources we treasure today.

As we look ahead, our largest conservation fundraiser of the year is already coming into focus. Cabin Fever Day has become one of FVTU's favorite traditions and a meaningful way to bring anglers, families and conservation-minded neighbors together. Please mark Saturday, January 30 on your calendars for this event at the Fox Cities Exhibition Center in downtown Appleton. What began as a fundraiser has grown into a regional celebration of fishing, education, community and the coldwater resources that connect us.

Last year's event was one of our most successful yet, with speakers, fly tying, casting instruction, exhibitors, aquatic insect displays, raffles, auctions, used equipment sales and time to connect with fellow anglers. We are excited to build on that momentum in 2027.

The planning committee is collaborating with the Fox Cities Exhibition Center and exploring new ideas, including expanded fly-casting opportunities and other improvements. At the same time, we are committed to preserving the welcoming, grassroots spirit that makes Cabin Fever Day special.

Cabin Fever Day is about more than fishing. It helps fund FVTU's work in coldwater conservation, trout habitat restoration and support for Wisconsin DNR Trout Habitat Crew projects. That's the kind of practical stewardship that keeps healthy streams flowing for future generations. Whether you are a fly angler, warm-water fisherman, conservation-minded outdoor enthusiast, or simply looking for a fun winter outing, Cabin Fever Day offers something for everyone. It is also a wonderful way to introduce others to Trout Unlimited and the coldwater places we value.

We will share more details as speakers, exhibitors, activities, and attractions are finalized. In the meantime, save the date, spread the word, and help us celebrate the waters, wildlife, and friendships that make this work worthwhile.

We're looking forward to another great year of coldwater conservation, outreach and service. We look forward to welcoming new people into the natural world that inspires us, and to continuing the work of protecting the cold, clean waters that we all appreciate so much.

—Tony Pudlo



Mark Hoffman

BEN HLABAN COACHES ISAAC ROMBERG AT THE COUNCIL YOUTH CAMP



Doug Nelson

HAPPY ANGLERS ENJOYING THE UPPER PENINSULA



John Barkmeier

FOX VALLEY CHAPTER HELPING YOUNG ANGLERS TIE FLIES AT THE FAIR

Frank Hornberg Chapter

The Frank Hornberg Chapter is excited to have a new board of directors and renewed involvement. New members and returning members are eager to make a difference in coldwater conservation in the Stevens Point and surrounding areas.

With this revitalization, we've partnered with the Stevens Point Area Senior High (SPASH) TU Chapter, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) Fly Fishing Club and the DNR to host various opportunities to welcome people of all ages and skill levels to get involved.

We held a brush-removal day on the Big Roche-A-Cri Creek in September and we're hosting a fly-tying night at Central Waters Brewery in Amherst on October 22. All are welcome to attend.

We also debuted our new quarterly newsletter, "The Hornberg Special," featuring local stories and interviews. To stay connected please visit our Facebook page: Trout Unlimited - Frank Hornberg Chapter, and our Instagram webpage @frankhornberg_troutunlimited. We invite folks in the Central Wisconsin area to get involved.

—Hannah Zdroik

Green Bay Chapter

In July we joined Brown County Volunteer Services for their 36th Annual Kid's Fishing Day. The Chapter has been a partner in this wonderful community youth event for 35 years. Thanks go out to Brown County Volunteer Services, the Brown County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, Green Bay Area Exchange Club and Festival Foods. A special thanks to the kiddos. They are the true stars of the show. An additional thanks to the 10 chapter members who volunteered on this wonderful day.

Habitat improvement days this past summer included a fishability and in-stream brush bundling day in June on the Evergreen River. We partnered with the DNR and the Wolf River, Wisconsin River Valley, Oconto River and Antigo chapters. This was likely the Taylor Curran's last project with us as he accepted another position with the DNR in western Wisconsin. It has been wonderful coordinating habitat days and getting to know Taylor over the years. We all wish him the best in his new role.

Chapter News



Adrian Meseberg

EVERGREEN RIVER GBTU HABITAT IMPROVEMENT DAY VOLUNTEERS

A July habitat day featured a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). We removed an old hand-made bridge that was backing up water and creating a barrier to fish passage on the First South Branch of the Oconto River. We used rocks that were part of the old bridge to reinforce the banks. A special thank you goes out to Mitch Bent for covering the grilled lunch for everyone.

Our VSP program spent the summer bringing local veterans on monthly fishing trips. Now we'll transition into fly-tying and other indoor activities. Veterans and volunteers of all experience levels are welcome. For more information contact Veterans Program Coordinators Jim Hauer at jehauer1@icloud.com or 920-639-3718, or Paul Kruse at kruser2@new.rr.com or 920-639-2361.

In one of the biggest moments in our chapter's history, the Green Bay Chapter has adopted its first stream, and we held a celebration to honor the occasion. We are now the proud caretakers of the North Branch of Beaver Creek (NBBC), a class I trout stream approximately 45 minutes north of Green Bay. This program is a three-year partnership with the DNR.

Ironically, our chapter leaders have discussed this opportunity. It just never materialized. Then, on a Doty Creek habitat improvement in June of 2025, new chapter leader Dave Purnell innocently asked "why doesn't our chapter consider focusing on a single stream?"

This simple question led to a more focused effort on how this could be a reality. So we researched related programs and landed on the DNR's Adopt-a-Stream. We spoke with biologists on what stream made the most sense, and all strongly suggested NBBC. We asked leaders from other chapters how their chapters have benefited from Adopt-a-Stream. This included John Simonson of the Wild Rivers Chapter and Al Wortz of the Lakeshore Chapter. We did an inventory of our history with NBBC.

All this information was shared with the chapter board at our April 2026 Annual Meeting. Chapter leaders unanimously voted to adopt NBBC. In May 2026 Chapter Habitat Coordinator Paul Kruse submitted the application.

In a wild twist of fate, TU's Great Lakes Engagement Manager Jamie Vaughan contacted us regarding support for an upcoming GBTU event. She specifically stated, "we wanted to see if we could support and partner on one of your upcoming workdays this year, like the Beaver Creek project in August." They had received a grant from Bell's Brewing and were looking "to support some volunteer stewardship activities and community engagement."



Adrian Meseberg

SHOWING OFF A WALLEYE CAUGHT WITH VOLUNTEER LEE MEYERS
GBTU's Kid's Fishing Day in July was a hit.



Adrian Meseberg

DNR SHOCKING DEMO AT CHAMPIONS OF BEAVER CREEK CELEBRATION



Adrian Meseberg

CELBRATING THE CHAMPIONS OF BEAVER CREEK



Adrian Meseberg

VOLUNTEERS AT THE S.B. OCONTO RIVER HABITAT DAY IN JULY



Adrian Meseberg

VOLUNTEERS FROM NORTHEAST CHAPTERS UNITED ON THIS ONE
The South Branch Oconto River got plenty help on this July work day.

It was as if the stars, the sun and the moon were aligned.

From there things moved quickly. They had to. We only had a couple of months to put together an event. Throughout a handful of meetings, we accomplished what we needed to.

First, we decided on a name: Champions of Beaver Creek, which is in line with TU's "Every River Needs a Champion" campaign. With the help of Randy Rake, we designed a logo. We secured a location at the Robert and Mary Holley farm and we developed a celebration plan. With only 10 days to spare, the DNR approved our application. Everything was coming together nicely.

August 15 was our Champions of Beaver Creek Celebration, starting with breakfast, and followed by habitat improvement work on NBBC. About 50 supporters showed up, with about 30-40 volunteers taking part in the actual habitat work. Volunteers were also treated to free custom "NBBC Champion" hat or shirt.

After wrapping up our NBBC habitat improvement project, the DNR treated everyone to some stream-shocking demonstrations. Dozens of eager onlookers lined the creek, waiting to see what lived beneath the surface… and let's just say the results did not disappoint. Several large trout and multiple other fish species were netted, giving everyone an up-close look at the thriving life in Beaver Creek.

The Holley family farm proved to be the perfect location for breakfast, lunch, fly-casting, macro-invertebrate tubs, NBBC history, great stories and even better company. The open-house format had folks coming and going. We estimated 70–80 attendees joined us on this milestone day. It was an amazing way to celebrate our adoption of the NBBC

A huge thanks go out to TU's Jamie Vaughn, Chris Collier, and Danielle Nelson, the DNR's Jonathan P., Kyle K., Brent R., and Max S., Bell Brewing, Robert and Mary Holley, our Northeast Region TU brothers and sisters, and all of the volunteers, guests, supporters and anyone we may have missed. Your

Chapter News

passion, energy and commitment made this day unforgettable.

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

—Adrian Meseberg

Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter

In early August we resumed our stream restoration project work on the Blue River at the Snow Bottom State Natural Area. Meanwhile, we are already diving into the paperwork for our 2027 project, again on the Blue River a couple miles from Montfort.

Our Big Spring workday saw 26 participants cutting and spraying lots of willows. Kyle and Don cooked and provided lunch.

Kurt Myer had a summer school program from Fennimore to introduce students to fly fishing. He also reports that our Trout In the Classroom program put 96 trout into Castle Rock Creek. The kids have now released about 500 trout into area streams since our TIC program began.

The fall picnic will be October 3 from 10-3 pm at the Bowers Road crossing of the Blue River at the Snow Bottom Nature Area.

We have a joint workday with the Southern Chapter on Sept 26 at Gordon Creek off Brue Road on the Trent Nelson easement. We'll be working with Justin Haglund and Lloyd Meng removing boxelders and willows upstream and downstream of the bridge.

Saturday, January 9 is our tentative date for the Lie-and-Tie.

—Brian Larson

Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter

Kiap-TU-Wish participated in educational activities in May beginning with the Rocky Branch Elementary Eco Day in May. Ben Toppel's class was out on the Kinni learning about stream ecology and habitat. Chapter volunteers had as much fun as the kids. Kiap Volunteers Scott Holmes, Jeff Himes, Tom Schnadt and Greg Olson staffed the invertebrate station.

Chapter volunteers were present as University of Minnesota Professor Dean Hansen presented "Bugs In the Classroom" to Mrs. Armbrust's fifth-grade class at Greenwood Elementary in May. The kids were thrilled to get a closer look at these incredible insects and learn about lifecycles and how important they to the health of rivers. Volunteers again assisted Dean Hansen at Prescott Intermediate School, also in May.

August featured our fourth annual Phil's Harvest Picnic at Phil Kashian's Milkhouse Cottage and Gardens on the Rush River. The chapter and Phil served up hotdogs, chips, potato salad, watermelon and sweet corn. This fun social event offered great conversation with an opportunity to cast some fly rods, fish the Rush River or just sit around the bonfire. Chapter volunteers offered mentored fly fishing for those new to the sport.

This is the 30th year of Casting for Recovery and the Minnesota/Wisconsin chapter has been holding a retreat for 15 of those years. Each chapter is responsible for raising the funds needed to hold a retreat. Donations from Kiap-TU-Wish help make the retreats an annual event. The past two years the retreat has been held at the Alverna Center in Winona and fishing in Whitewater State Park. Other years have been in River Falls, with fishing at the Ellsworth Rod & Gun Club.

Learning to fly fish is what brings most women to the retreat, but they get so much more. They get to experience the healing power of nature, stand in water without getting wet, meet new friends and share stories and experiences. It's truly awesome. The retreats are put on by volunteers who instruct, coach and guide the women in the basics of fly fishing. Special thanks to chapter members Sarah Hartung, Linda Radimecky, Jo Davidson, Michele Bevis and Steve Wardell. Members of Laughing Trout, TCTU, Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota were guides, and some also donated flies.

In September held a Chapter Gathering and Gear Swap at The Garage Bikes + Brews in River Falls. This was a great chance to meet up with old friends and make some new ones. Members discussed how the summer went, perhaps while enjoying a beverage. The chapter provided pizza. This event allows guests to swap or sell used fishing and outdoor equipment. Garage Bikes + Brews is located just a stone's throw from the Kinni.

Habitat work continued on the South Fork of the Kinni in late May. Work addressed some maintenance issues including willow removal and treatment along the banks in places missed during the last clearing project. Volunteers girdled and sprayed some remaining large willows and relocated some misplaced rocks downstream of the new ERO (Elevated Riparian Optimization) structures.

Work concluded in late August at the Steeple Drive restoration on the upper Kinni. Chapter volunteers seeded and mulched the newly restored area. This site was where much of our brushing season was focused on last fall and winter. Volunteers included John Walter, Dan Wilcox, Dave Gregg, Jeff Dahl, Kevin Palattao and Randy Arnold, along with Nate Anderson's DNR crew of Josh and Zach. 140 bales of straw were spread to help promote the establishment of some groundcover grass.

—Gary Horvath



Badger Flowers

DEAN HANSON PRESENTS HIS FAMOUS BUGS IN THE CLASSROOM



Randy Arnold

MULCHING THE STEEPLE DRIVE PROJECET SITE ON THE KINNI

Lakeshore Chapter

Most of our summer stream habitat work focused on Ben Nutt Creek, downstream from Sumac Road. This area had not seen any significant habitat work in many years and our DNR team highlighted it for improvement. The area is nearly impassable in many spots because of the fallen ash trees from the emerald ash borer.

Our first several workdays here involved cutting stream-side trails to provide access to areas in need of work. In August, we were fortunate to have the Wisconsin Youth Conservation Congress join us for our workday. They brought 20 teenage and eight adult volunteers with lots of enthusiasm and energy. Combined with 18 chapter volunteers, we cleared nearly a quarter mile of choked stream back to normal flow. It was a fun, inspirational and productive day.

Our Water Action Volunteer teams continue to monitor water quality monthly at five locations. We currently have 11 WAV volunteers monitoring Mill Creek, Ben Nutt, the Onion River, the Pigeon River and LaBudde Creek. Thank you to our volunteers who keep this important citizen science work going in Sheboygan County.

Again this year we conducted a one-day STREAM Girls camp at Camp Evelyn, in partnership with the Girl Scouts of Manitou Council.

Led by Wendy Lutzke, our volunteers spent the day with 15 girls ages 12 to 13.

It was one of those 95-degree days, so we quickly adjusted our agenda on the fly to minimize the time in the blazing sun. We still managed to provide all of the components, including a modified stream walk, a macro invertebrate



Badger Flowers

STUDENTS AT THE ROCKY BRANCH ELEMENTARY ECO DAY



LAKESHORE AND YOUTH CONSERVATION CONGRESS VOLUNTEERS

Chapter News



LAKESHORE CHAPTER'S STREAMGIRLS ENJOYED THE BUG INSPECTION

study of Mullet Creek critters, fly tying and fish printing (instead of casting).As usual, all of our volunteers loved the time with the youth and were so impressed with the girls' enthusiasm.

September included the final "weekday streamers" gathering for the season. This group of active retirees typically gathers every other week for some light stewardship work. With the season coming to a close, they opted for strictly social gathering to end a very successful year. Thanks to all of our streamers for your work this year.

Our September workday continued the work on the Ben Nutt. We extended the great work done in August and in the first week of September by our local DNR staff.

A few days later we kicked off our fall meeting season with an event for members and non-members alike. We held a casting clinic, fly tying instruction, informational tables describing our work, meet-and-greet with our board members and a free meal.

The event was designed to extend the Lakeshore TU community to members and non-members alike. We are incredibly grateful for the strong friendships, shared purpose and shared interests that we enjoy and want to share with the greater community.

—Al Wortz and Wendy Lutzke

Marinette Chapter

In early August some of our members held a work day to brush access trail, clearing about a third of a mile from Hwy 8 to the North Branch of the Pike River. The project allows easy walking access to a beautiful section of that stream. Following the project they fished the area and had some success despite the fact that it was the middle of the afternoon.

—Dale Lange

Oconto River Chapter

Our annual summer picnic at Wocking Pond was the highlight of July. We awarded prizes for the largest fish in each species, then everyone enjoyed a great meal. Meetings resumed in September. At least one member of our chapter also attended the celebration at Beaver Creek. We will also resume preparations for another successful school year of Trout In the Classroom.

At our September meeting, we set the dates for next year's meetings. Regular chapter meetings will be on the second Tuesdays of March (9), May(11), September(14), and December(14). Our banquet is tentatively set for April 20. The chapter picnic next year will be moved to June 12th. In the past, it had been in July.

—Dean Simon

Southeast Wisconsin Chapter

The Southeast Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited was presented with the Lake Country Clean Waters' Annual Award at its Healthy Lakes Conference in September. The award recognizes SEWTU for our habitat work in the Lake Country and beyond. Credit goes to everyone connected with the Habitat Committee, particularly



Ken Rizzo

SEWTU'S SCUPPERNONG SPRINGS WORK DAY CREW



Ken Rizzo

SEWTU'S SCUPPERNONG SPRINGS WORK DAY CREW

Ken Rizzo, Rick Larkin, Joe Schroeder and Chuck Staley.

That habitat work was on display in September at Scuppernong Springs in the Kettle Moraine State Forest, where more than 20 volunteers installed biologs and removed invasive species. SEWTU will conclude its habitat projects for the year at Whitewater Creek in October and Rosenow Creek in November.

To fund our habitat work, we kicked off the fall and winter chapter meeting schedule in September with our 5th annual Fly Fishing Film Festival featuring the F3T series of high-quality professionally produced fly fishing short films from around the world. The funds that we raised will be used in our continuing effort to restore and maintain trout streams and spring ponds, not only in southeast Wisconsin but in other locations in Wisconsin, including the Driftless Area.

These funds are especially critical as our partners in the Wisconsin DNR are experiencing drastic budget cuts in this area.

Our regular chapter meetings resume in October, when Andy Avgoulas, former chapter president and current operator of the Fishing Pharmacist Guide Service, will discuss fishing for trout and salmon on the Lake Michigan tributaries in the fall.

Milwaukee is blessed to have world-class fishing for salmon and steelhead in the middle of the city on the Milwaukee River and anyone looking to hook into one should contact Andy for a trip.

Other recent chapter events were the Driftless Mentored Weekend in August, when chapter members teamed up with novice anglers looking to hone their skills.

Some of our chapter members participated in the Wisconsin Veteran's Home mobile trout pond event in Union Grove, where volunteers helped bait hooks, netted and cleaned fish, and had the opportunity to meet with some of the last surviving veterans of World War II.

—Brian Mullins

Southern Wisconsin Chapter

SWTU's prior reports shared our progress on Dane County's Duerst property on the Sugar River at Dane County's recently acquired 640-acre property along the river. Step one was to have our chapter crews clearing out tremendous tangles of honeysuckle during the course of three workdays. That helped to set up step two: Seeing Stihl's seasoned crew of professional sawyers removing a wall of boxelders from an old berm along the river. Boy, did the sawdust fly.

The work was completed and then some with the Stihl crew, SWTU, TUDARE, Dane County and the Wisconsin Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. The county is now set for step three: Removing or breaching the berms to reconnect the river to its floodplain and a spring complex. The former reduces stream bank erosion and the latter provides a source of cold, clean water to the river. That's essential considering the inevitable warming temperatures from climate change.

For helping us get from Step 1 to Step 2 to Step 3, we'd like to thank all of the people and organizations who have contributed to this effort over the past several years. Your time, effort and energy certainly made a difference.

It wasn't all sawing and hauling and stacking burn piles for us this



Dyan Lesnik

STIHL CREW AND SEWTU TACKLE GIANT BOXELDERS ALONG THE SUGAR

The Stihl crew, SWTU and friends tackled a stand of giant boxelders along the Sugar River.

Chapter News



Deb Muresan

SOUTHERN CHAPTER SHARING CASTING SKILLS AT GILDA'S CLUB

Wisconsin Clearwaters Chapter

Funded by a grant from the Alliance of Dunn County Conservation and Sports Clubs, a sign at "Fisherman's Park" on Elk Creek west of Eau Claire is being restored and updated. The sign was originally erected in the 1980's dedicating the stream-restoration project to the memory of member Daniel J. Murphy.

In addition to having some rot, it also needed updating to our current chapter name.

It had been originally nailed with spikes to a large oak tree, which later died and fell, leaving the stump and sign. With a gentle push, the sign came down, along with a large chunk of rotten oak. The ants that were holding hands to support the sign must have finally lost their grip.

Fortunately, we were able to restore three of the six original boards and use them in the final sign.

By fall the project should be completed with the name of the park, our current chapter name and credit to the Alliance of Dunn County Conservation and Sports Clubs for the overall improvements to this small park.

Back in August a few of our Clear Waters Chapter members along with members from other outdoor sports groups, met with members of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association at the Brewing Projekt in Eau Claire.

We were there to discuss our mutual interests, as well as possible future collaborations. The desire for clean healthy aquatic resources was the unifying interest.

Also in August, chapter member Bob Mitchell presented Basic Angler Education to the Colfax Cub Scout Troop at the Red Cedar Preserve. The audience was youth from kindergarten to fourth grade, and plenty of hands-on props were passed around.

They learned a variety of fishing methods, including waving a fly rod, and how to set up equipment to match the fish being targeted.

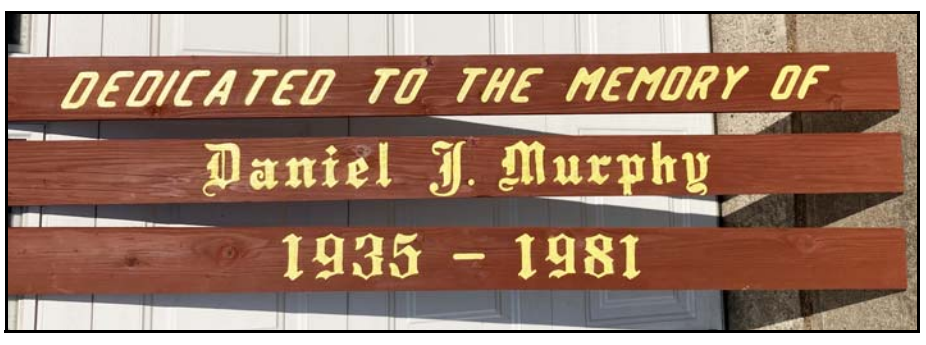
Even through it was a warm, cloudless day, a number of the kids managed to catch some fish.



BOB MITCHELL SHARES HIS FISHING KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE
Wisconsin Clearwaters Chapter member and Wisconsin DNR Fishing Skills Instructor Bob Mitchell shares tips on becoming a becoming a better angler.



FORMER SIGN AT DUNN COUNTY SPOT KNOWN AS "FISHERMAN'S PARK"



RESTORATION WAS COMPLETED USING THE THREE SALVAGED BOARDS

Wild Rivers Chapter

As I write this, we just had our first decent rainfall in a long time. Northwest Wisconsin is in a serious drought and some of our major trout streams are at record lows. Hopefully we will have a wet fall.

Despite the drought, we've been busy during the past few months, including continued work on our two Adopted State Fishery Areas – White River and Clam River.

The 26th Annual Kids Fishing Day at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center was a great success. We donated kids rod/reel combos and many of us volunteered to help the kids catch fish from the visitor center pond.

Another Lake Superior tributary we are focusing on is North Fish Creek. During the summer chapter volunteers restored the Karaba Road fishermen's trail. That meant cutting part of the trail through a dense wooded area.

Here are some of our most recent events, projects and accomplishments:

- Marengo River. Funded 1,200 tree seedlings and helped plant them.
- White River State Fishery. Purchased 2,500 tree seedlings and planted them.
- Supported Women's Rivers of Recovery
- Helped BRSC & DNR with tree planting on the Little Brule River
- Kids Fishing Day at the Norther Great Lakes Visitor Center
- Two workdays in the Clam River State Fishery Area
- Assisted U.S. Fish & Wildlife staff with brook trout surveys on four culvert-replacement locations
- Two workdays in the Clam River State Fishery Area
- Cleared the Karaba Road fishermen's trail along North Fish Creek
- Assisted the DNR with electroshocking on the Iron River
- Chapter Member Celebration in Seeley
- Assisted the DNR with electroshocking on the Iron River.

—John Simonson



WILD RIVERS VOLUNTEERS CLEARING THE KARABA ROAD TRAIL

Southern Chapter

As we ease into fall and winter, our monthly chapter gatherings return. That means Conservation Chair Jim Hess Conservation Chair has lined up another stellar set of stream workdays. We're always excited for workdays, but this fall even more so as we put an array of new battery-powered saws donated by Stihl to use.

As always, other TU chapter members are welcome to our events. Please visit swtu.org to learn about these and other activities.

—Drew Kasel

Chapter News

Chapter member Joe Knight held a book party in August to celebrate the release of his book, "Mostly Woodcock; and a Season of Hunting With a Headstrong Setter and Old Friends." Proof that we are a diverse group whose heads aren't all wet in a stream.

The fall member meeting schedule begins October 15 featuring acclaimed beaver researcher Emily Fairfax presenting "Trout, Beavers and Healthy Streams" at The Fish House at 418 9th Street in Altoona. It should be a very interesting presentation.

Our November 12 meeting is at the Brewing Projekt in Eau Clair with featured speaker Red Cedar Fly-fishing Shop owner and Guide Jeff Frawley. For more details on his presentation, watch our website and Facebook page as the date draws nearer.

—Bob Mitchell

Wisconsin River Valley Chapter

August featured Sporting Heritage Day at the Wausau School Forest. Thank you to Eric Pease, John Meachen, Doug Stubbe, Jim Slayton and Al Hauber for helping kids to tie flies and showing them how to cast…even in the misty rain.

Here's an update on our WAV program. Thank you to Perry Nikolai and Elizabeth Andersen for stepping in to help Jim Slayton and I with the monthly data collection. Our data collection spot started out fine in May. It was on the Prairie River at what was once a boyscout camp. Several willow trees line the banks in this section, and it seems whenever there is a storm, another chunk of a tree breaks off, or a limb is dangling lower than before. One of those big willows toppled over from a storm in June, forcing us to move our spot upstream.

Collecting the data provides a chance to observe how everything changes through the seasons. The temperatures, the bird sounds, the bug hatches, rising fish, the greening of the spring, the wildflowers, and the colors in the fall. When spring comes again to discover what may have changed over the winter

In September we were at the Samoset Jamboree in Rhinelander to help scouts with fly tying and casting. There were about 800 scouts at the event and we had several stations for them to explore.

Below is our chapter event and activity schedule through spring of 2027. Please note that meeting locations and days have changed for this presentation season. Hackle and Hops will be the first Monday of the month starting October 5 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and will now be at the Northwoods Veteran's Post at 601 Johnson Street in Merrill.

For the upcoming meetings/presentations, social time is 6 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. followed by chapter news and presentation at 7 p.m.

- Thursday, October 15: "What are custom rods and why do I need one?" by Ian Hackett of Hackett Custom Rods at Wausau On Water (WOW) in Wausau.
- Thursday, November 19: "Tenkara" by George Coonley at the Merrill-Northwoods Veteran's Post in Merrill.
- Thursday, December 17: "Insect Apocalypse" by UWSP professor/entomologist Paul Whitaker at WOW in Wausau.
- Thursday, January 21st - "An Evening with the DNR" with the DNR's Dave Siebel at the Merrill-Northwoods Veteran's Post in Merrill.
- February, date TBD – International Fly Fishing Film Festival
  Thursday, March 18: "Herbal Exploring" by Melissa Tokarski at WOW in Wausau.
- Thursday, April 15th – "Going subsurface-big trout on wet flies" with Jake Pease at the Merrill-Northwoods Veteran's Post in Merrill.

—Linda Lehman

Got those TU plates on your car yet?

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



***GIVING**, from page 9*

A potentially better approach would be to take $20,000 personally and instruct the IRA custodian to send the remaining $10,000 directly to qualified charities as QCDs. The entire $30,000 RMD has been satisfied, but only $20,000 is generally included in taxable income. Unlike an ordinary charitable gift, the donor does not take a separate charitable deduction for the $10,000 QCD. Instead, the amount is excluded from taxable income in the first place.

That distinction can be particularly valuable for retirees who take the standard deduction and therefore might receive little or no incremental federal tax benefit from an ordinary charitable deduction. Keeping the QCD out of adjusted gross income may also help with other income-sensitive tax calculations and potentially Medicare premiums.

There are important nuances surrounding which IRA accounts are eligible for QCD treatment, strict rules governing how funds must move from the IRA custodian to an eligible charity, and other technical requirements that apply once donors reach age 70½. Given these complexities, it is important to discuss this option with your tax advisor or financial planner. But for someone over 70½ who already plans to make charitable gifts, a QCD deserves to be near the top of the list of options to consider.

This is best suited for charitably inclined IRA owners age 70½ or older, particularly those taking RMDs or those who do not itemize deductions.

Same generosity. Different results.

The important lesson is not that one of these four methods is always best.

It is that the asset used to make a charitable contribution can matter almost as much as the amount of the contribution itself.

In each case, the objective is the same: move as much of the donor's intended commitment as possible toward the cause rather than losing part of it unnecessarily to taxes, transaction costs or administrative friction.

For those of us who care about Wisconsin's coldwater resources, that efficiency matters. A few additional dollars may purchase stream improvement materials. A larger gift might help secure access, restore a degraded reach of stream or provide the matching funds that allow an entire project to move forward.

We spend considerable time thinking about where our charitable dollars can have the greatest impact. It is worth spending a little time thinking about how those dollars get there.

The Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited, Inc. is recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Its EIN is 23-7188784. To consider donating to Wisconsin Trout Unlimited using any of these strategies, or others not discussed here, please visit our website at https://wicouncil.tu.org or contact Scott Wagner, Treasurer, Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited, Inc. at john.scott.wagner@outlook.com or 715-781-6874.

NOTE: This article is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered tax, legal or investment advice. Tax rules and individual circumstances vary. Donors considering significant gifts should consult their tax, legal or financial advisors and the receiving charitable organization before completing a transaction.

John Krueger retired from the asset management business after 32 years in the financial services industry. He now serves on the board of the Lakeshore Chapter of TU.

Scott Wagner is a retired business banker and longtime Trout Unlimited volunteer. He currently serves as Treasurer for the Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited.



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.

Hiking after Lahontan cutthroats

A goal to catch every U.S. trout, salmon and grayling pushed him higher and higher.



THE FIRST MILE AND A HALF OF THE TRAIL WAS RELATIVELY EASY
The trail here tracked up and down among large rock outcrops as it paralleled the main mountain slope. It was quite scenic, with large pines providing shade and habitat for lots of birds.

Words and photos by John Lyons, UW Zoological Museum

Perhaps you've seen the pictures or videos of anglers holding monstrous cutthroat trout – 10 to 20 pounds or more – caught on flies from a desert landscape. These are from Pyramid Lake, Nevada, home of the largest cutthroat ever caught, 41 pounds in 1925, and a destination fishery for trophy trout.

he Lahontan cutthroat trout is the largest of four distinct types of cutthroat trout, which also includes Rocky Mountain, westslope and coastal, which were elevated from subspecies to full species by ichthyologists in 2016.

They are currently doing well in Pyramid Lake, thanks to intensive management and stocking by the Pyramid Lake Paiute Indian Tribe and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

They are the rarest and least widely distributed of the four cutthroat species and is listed as federally threatened. Once common throughout the rivers and lakes of the Lahontan Basin in northwestern Nevada, northeastern California and southeastern Oregon, this species has disappeared from more than 90 percent of its original native range. Outside of Pyramid Lake, it hangs on in just a few small mountain lakes and streams.

Although I do hope to fish for the giants of Pyramid Lake someday, my main fishing focus at the moment is on variety rather than size.

For years I've had the goal of catching all the 21 trout, salmon and grayling species found in the United States. I've chipped away at this and by early summer 2026 I was at 18 species. One that was missing was the Lahontan cutthroat, along with the coastal cutthroat and the bull trout.

This past July, a funeral brought me relatively close to the range of the Lahontan, so I decided to add a couple of days to my trip to try and catch one.

Mountains the only option

Pyramid Lake is closed to trout fishing in the summer months, so my quest had to focus on the handful of mountain lakes and streams where Lahontans still occur.

I pored over agency surveys and internet angling posts to select a site. The information I could find was a bit discouraging. Although it was easy to pull up lists of the few waters that had Lahontan Cutthroats, it was much harder to find a spot where anglers targeting this species had been successful, particularly in the heat and low water of the summer. There were lots of tales of failure.

Upper Truckee it is

But finally, I found a place where everyone agreed that the likelihood of catching a Lahontan Cutthroat in July was high, the Upper Truckee River in the Sierra Nevadas in California, about 20 miles south and 2,500 feet higher in elevation than its terminus in Lake Tahoe. The only issue was access, as it was a walk-in location requiring a 3.5-mile hike over a mountain pass.

The hike into the Upper Truckee, at a place called Meiss Meadow, is via the famous Pacific Coast Trail.

Officially, this part of the trail is considered "moderate" difficulty. That might be a proper description for a younger person in reasonably good physical condition. As an overweight, out-of-shape, lowland senior like me, this might reach or exceed my capabilities. Several online testimonials from folks my age and condition agreed with my assessment. But the lure of the Lahontan was strong, so I booked my flight and made my plans.

Things started poorly

My flight into Reno was delayed, and by the time I got to my motel in South Lake Tahoe, it was 2:30 a.m. by my internal clock. And I never sleep well the first few nights that I'm at high elevation, about 6,500 feet in this case. So I tossed and turned all night and was pretty bleary-eyed when I got up early the next morning.

At that point, the temperature was in the high 40s, and I shivered in my thin summer clothes. But it would reach 90 by early afternoon, and the sun would be intense in the thin, cloudless air, so, despite the cold, I didn't replace my light sun shirt with a heavier sweatshirt.

In my tired and uncomfortable state, I was nervous as to how I would do on the coming hike.

"I can do this"

It took me about an hour to drive to the Meiss Trailhead along California State Highway 89. There the parking lot was already filling up with day-hikers, all of whom looked fitter and more confident than me.

But I swallowed hard and started out, carrying two liters of water (which proved to be barely enough) and a 7-foot, 3-weight fly rod and a small selection of tippets and small dries and nymphs in my backpack.

The first mile and a half of the trail was relatively easy, tracking up and down among large rock outcrops as it paralleled the main mountain slope. It was quite scenic, with large pines providing shade and habitat for lots of birds.

"I can do this." I said to myself.

Then the trail came out of the woods and started up the slope in earnest. I quickly commenced huffing and puffing and had to stop every five minutes to catch my breath. Other hikers began to pass me, but I didn't care. I just focused on the trail right in front of me and tried to keep moving forward.

Finally, after about a half mile and a 500-foot elevation gain, I reached the pass at 9,000 feet. Hallelujah! The view was spectacular. The only sound was the wind, and a Golden Eagle soared above. That is until yet another helicopter clattered over the ridgeline towing a large container of water to fight a forest fire just over the horizon.

The vulnerability of the Sierra Nevada to fires was always in the forefront during my visit to the Lake Tahoe region.

The next mile and a half were



VIEW FROM THE TOP OF THE PASS
"Finally, after about a half mile and a 500-foot elevation gain, I reached the pass at 9,000 feet. Hallelujah! The view was spectacular. The only sound was the wind, and a Golden Eagle soared above. That is until yet another helicopter clattered over the ridgeline towing a large container of water to fight a forest fire just over the horizon."

mostly downhill, a welcome change. I was feeling pretty good at having made it over the top, although I knew I would have to climb back over the pass on my way out. I started crossing little rivulets of water, the ultimate headwaters of the Little Truckee River.

Trees reappeared, and then I entered Meiss Meadow, which struck me more like a savannah with clumps of trees scattered among swaths of grasses and low shrubs. Perhaps I didn't go far enough to see where it really opened up. The rivulets condensed and became larger, and finally I reached a stream crossing where the water looked like it might be big enough to hold trout. At this point, the channel was only 2-3 feet wide and almost completely enclosed in short willows. I wasn't sure if it was worth fishing this far upstream. But then I looked at the water through an opening in the brush and saw a 7" trout finning in the cold clear water. I dropped my backpack and began to rig up.

Gorgeous and gullible

This was some of the easiest trout fishing I've ever enjoyed. I didn't even get my feet wet. As long as I wasn't completely obvious to the fish by standing right on the bank in plain sight, they didn't spook.

So I stood behind the low willows and dapped a #16 Adams dry onto any openings I could find, although any small fly probably would have worked. Anywhere that was deeper than a foot and had some cover produced strikes. Each little pool, barely the size of the top of a desk, seemed to have 10-20 hungry trout.

In an hour I landed a dozen or more and lost twice as many, although I think many of the losses were the same fish hitting the fly over and over until they were finally caught.

None were bigger than 10 inches, but they were beautiful Lahontan cutthroat trout. Their bodies were a gorgeous golden copper color with a diffuse reddish strip down the middle and subtle dark vertical parr markings. The body and tail had many small black spots and there was a faint crimson "cutthroat" slash on each side of the jaw. These trout were well worth the walk in.

Wild, but not truly native

However, although what I caught were wild, self-sustaining, genetically pure Lahontans, the Upper Truckee fish were not an unbroken lineage going back thousands of years.

In fact, if I'd made this hike 20 years earlier, all I would have encountered would have been brook trout. Like many streams and lakes within the range of the Lahontan cutthroat, habitat degradation from historical mining, poor forestry practices and overgrazing, coupled with invasion by non-native trout species, caused the Lahontan population in the Upper Truckee River to plummet.

I was actually fishing over a recently restored population. Since 2009, a joint project between the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Lake Tahoe Conservancy, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Trout Unlimited has been improving stream and lake habitat, removing non-native fish, restocking Lahontans, and maintaining a barrier to non-native trout reinvasion in Meiss Meadow.

The work in the upper part of the meadow, where I was, had been completed in 2016, but restoration on the lower part further downstream was ongoing and scheduled to be completed in 2030. Looking at these beautiful cutthroats, I was very grateful for everyone's efforts.

Long trek back

I could have kept catching fish, but for once I decided to not overdo it. I broke down my rod, caught my breath for a few minutes sitting on a log, and then started the long trek back. Once again, I sucked wind and stopped often heading back up to the pass, but this time the walk seemed a little easier, probably because of the residual adrenalin from the great fishing.

Once I crossed the pass and started heading down, I was feeling really good and perhaps getting a little smug about my back-country abilities. But then I reached the last mile and a half of up-and-down trail through the trees and rock outcrops, and I was dismayed at how hard the "up" parts of the trail were the second time around.

My lack of rest over the past 24 hours caught up with me, and I really struggled. By the time I staggered into the parking lot I was done, and I'm not sure I could have hiked much further. But I was very pleased with my accomplishment. And I was even more pleased that I would never have to do it again.

John Lyons is Curator of Fishes at University of Wisconsin Zoological Museum and a member of the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of TU.



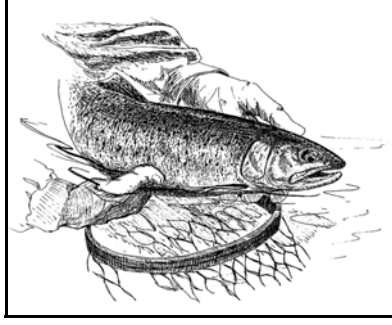
MEISS MEADOW IS THE SITE OF A MULTI-PARTNER PROJECT
Since 2009, a joint project between the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Lake Tahoe Conservancy, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Trout Unlimited has been improving stream and lake habitat, removing non-native fish, restocking Lahontans, and maintaining a barrier to non-native trout reinvasion in Meiss Meadow.



A HARD-EARNED LAHONTAN CUTTHROAT

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2. Handle fish in the net. Grasp them across the back and head for firm but gentle control. Use the net fabric as your "glove."
3. Turn fish belly up while removing hooks. This disorients fish momentarily for easier, quicker handling.
4. Don't remove swallowed hooks. Just cut the line... doing so saves two-thirds of deeply hooked trout.
5. Don't keep fish out of the water more than 10-15 seconds. Fragile gills are damaged after that...especially in cold weather.

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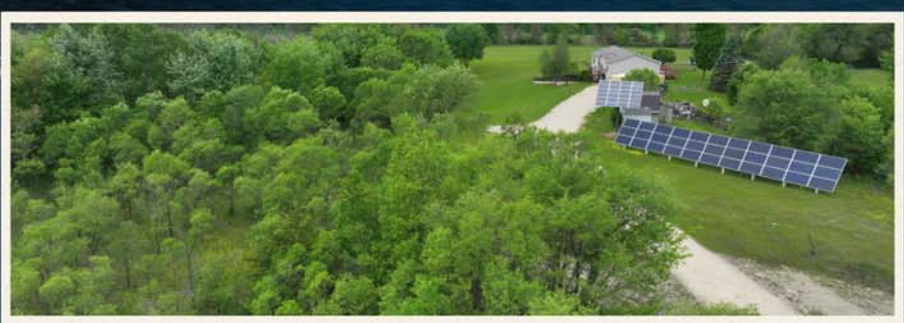
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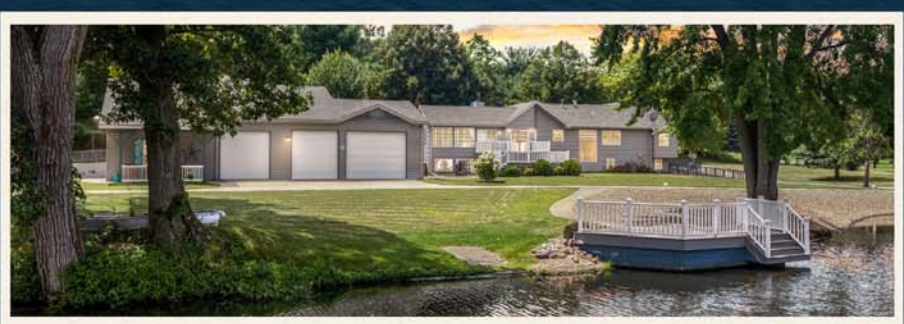
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