



TROUT UNLIMITED MINNESOTA

The Official Publication of Minnesota Trout Unlimited - June 2022

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MNTU PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

TYING THE BEADHEAD SCUD

RUSH CREEK HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

FREE THE KINNI

THE SOUTH BRANCH OF THE ROOT RIVER

SUMMER YOUTH FISHING PROGRAMS

Minnesota Trout Unlimited
P.O. Box 845
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EDITOR’S ANGLE
 THE END OF TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM?

By Jade Thomason, Editor

This year, students from roughly five dozen schools around the state of Minnesota celebrated spring by releasing their own hand-raised trout into a stream or lake. These hundreds of children have a newfound love for clean, cold water, and an appreciation for what a trout needs to survive. They will head into summer break shortly, and take with them their new knowledge of flowing rivers, mayflies, and healthy trout. Hopefully they will be future anglers, as well as advocates for healthy environments.

The success of Trout in the Classroom (TIC), nurturing not only trout but teaching students as well, has been supported for the last four years by our statewide education team, led by the incredibly competent and dedicated Amber Taylor. Amber, along with Evan Griggs and a

host of additional seasonal staff, TU volunteers and community members, have grown the program into something to be proud of. From humble beginnings starting with the first schools (still in operation!) in Bemidji many years ago, the TIC portion of our educational programming has blossomed and expanded throughout the state.

Unfortunately, the program is now threatened with closure. Political infighting at the state capitol in May lead to the cut of our next projected round of funding—approved and supported by state staff—from the final bill that was passed. This loss of new funds will cause our state education program to run out of funding as of July 1, 2022. If no new funding stream comes available, we will no longer have a statewide, coordinated Trout in the Classroom program.



Look for emails and information coming soon on how you can help play a role in keeping our programming alive.

CHECK OUT THE FULL MNTU PHOTO CONTEST RESULTS STARTING ON PAGE 5. PHOTO BY DAVE NORLING JR.

ON THE COVER

A rainbow trout comes in to net. An honorable mention in the 2022 MNTU Photo Contest. John Weiss photo.

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Trout Unlimited Minnesota is the official publication of Minnesota Trout Unlimited. Issues are distributed to all members of Minnesota Trout Unlimited chapters. Subscriptions are available by joining Trout Unlimited. See the back page for further details.

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Advertising rate sheet available on request. Send all editorial and advertising correspondence or other inquiries to the volunteer editor:

Jade Thomason
 2067 E. Pioneer Rd.
 Duluth, MN 55804
 218-525-2381
editor@mntu.org

Address change?

Please call 1-800-834-2419 or email trout@tu.org to update your contact information.

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GITCHE GUMEE CHAPTER BOARD MEMBER DON MITCHELL PLANTS A CEDAR TREE ALONG THE FRENCH RIVER NEAR DULUTH.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NETS AS CONSERVATION TOOLS

By John Lenczewski, MNTU Executive Director

Anglers have love-hate relationships with landing nets. They love nets' utility in concluding a battle and holding a fish so the hook can be removed, the fish briefly admired, and perhaps a quick photograph snapped before the fish is released unharmed. They hate the annoyance of nets catching on streamside vegetation. It used to be annoying figuring out a good system to attach the net to a vest or pack, but several attachment devices now on the market have solved that problem. I personally have settled on the release made by Rose Creek Anglers, which works well even on larger steelhead nets. I still balance the utility of nets versus the fuss. I no longer use nets for trout in the relatively low gradient streams of southeast Minnesota. However, on the steep rushing steelhead rivers of the North Shore I always carry a net. And you should too.

The proper handling of fish impacts fish survival and can impact population size. This is especially true where spawners in a relatively small, wild population, such as North Shore steelhead, are involved. Catch and release angling, done right, allows anglers to connect with these wild creatures with little impact on the population. However, in the past weeks I wit-

nessed anglers badly mishandling steelhead to the point that the fish "released" likely died within hours or days of being returned to the river. One group of anglers dragged steelhead well up onto the rocky shore to flop around until oxygen deprivation quieted the fish. Another angler placed a steelhead on the shore for a couple minutes while he found a tape measure, then eventually a camera. I was about to hike over to educate him when he slipped his finger through the fish's gills to carry it to the river. I then assumed it must be a clipped hatchery fish he was keeping and turned away. Sadly, I later learned he had "released" this wild steelhead. That fish may have slipped away in the current, but it surely died that day.

Guidelines for properly handling fish to be released:

1. Land the fish as quickly as possible.
2. Keep the fish (especially its gills) in the water at all times. Fish do not breathe air, rather their gills pull oxygen from the water. Gills collapse and fish begin to asphyxiate when removed from the water.
3. Wet your hands before handling a fish.



4. If taking a picture, take it with the fish in the net or with just one brief lift out of the water.

5. Use a net to make the above steps easier.

Most North Shore steelheaders use nets to meet these guidelines? Maybe not, but a net makes it far easier. And using a net is the best way to prevent completely exhausting a steelhead (and steelhead angler) on rushing North Shore rivers where places to corral a steelhead in calm, shallow water are few and far between.

Tight lines!



MINNESOTA COUNCIL UPDATE

ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP

By Brent Notbohm, Minnesota Council of TU Chair

With this year's exceptionally late spring here in the North Country, I got a lot of calls and texts from friends inquiring about fishing the North Shore for steelhead. "Is the ice out of the rivers yet? Are the rivers too high to fish? Is it even worth fishing?"

It's been a rough spring for steelheaders, but not necessarily for the fish. Compared to last year's drought-like conditions, the abundance of precipitation this winter and spring was a welcome change, at least until the flood gates opened. We'll have to assess that damage once the water recedes. I hate to say it, but this is what climate change looks like—extreme fluctuations in temperature, precipitation, and weather.

As the saying goes, change is both good and bad but always inevitable. Growing old stinks but the wisdom we gain along the way is invaluable. Climate change is

bad, but what we learn about our planet and what we can do to protect her is good. Being a member of Minnesota Trout Unlimited is also good. MNTU advocates for policies and legislation to stem the impacts of climate change. If you're interested in helping us with this important work, please consider joining our Advocacy Working Group. Contact MNTU Executive Director, John Lenczewski, if you wish to know more about it or would like to serve on this important group.

Speaking of service, MNTU is in the process of revising our Board of Directors membership policies per an action item in the strategic plan. Specifically, we are revitalizing the qualifications and nominations process with the hope of recruiting new members to the MNTU Board of Directors. Look for notifications about this later in the summer or contact your Chapter President for more information.



Back to the question, "is it even worth fishing?" That one is easy for me to answer. It's always worth fishing for steelhead, trout, or whatever you have an opportunity to fish for, because we only get so many days on the water. I hope you all enjoy some of the great fishing we have here in Minnesota this summer!



MNTU CONNECTIONS

Executive Director

John Lenczewski
jlenczewski@comcast.net
612-670-1629
www.mntu.org

MN Council of TU Chair

Brent Notbohm
chair@mntu.org

TU MN Editor

Jade Thomason
editor@mntu.org

TU MN Advertisement Manager

Carl Haensel
carlhaensel@hotmail.com

Gitche Gumee Chapter

Brandon Kime, President
brandon.kime@gmail.com

Headwaters Chapter

Kris Williams, President
topherjoel01@gmail.com

Hiawatha Chapter

Phil Pankow, Past President
pankow.phil0615@gmail.com
www.hiawathatu.org

Twin Cities Chapter

Bob Luck, President
bob.luck@twincitiestu.org
612-564-TCTU
www.twincitiestu.org

Win-Cres Chapter

Chuck Shepard, President
shepard@hbci.com
www.wincrestu.org

www.mntu.org



FLY TYING

WITH LAUGHING TROUT FLY FISHING

By Paul Johnson



The Beadhead Scud

The Beadhead Scud is a wonderful fly to fish all year long. Well, that is if you like to catch fish!

For the most part, I tie it in a natural color using a mixture of tan UV Ice Dubbing along with some rabbit or muskrat dubbing. Other great color options are orange, pink and gray. I tie all of these colors with red wire. I like how the red wire stands out on the latex scud backing.

On a size 14 or larger, I will use a dubbing loop to tie this fly. On smaller sizes, I apply the dubbing directly to my tying thread.

There is no wrong way to fish this pattern. You can fish it under an indicator. You can tight line nymph or use it as a dropper under a hopper.

You should tie some up and give them a try the next time you head out to your favorite stretch of water.

Let me know if you have any questions or if there is anything else I can help you with.

Paul Johnson
Paulwaconia@gmail.com

Materials List

Hook:	Scud Hook, Size 12 to 18
Bead:	Gold Tungsten or Brass, Sized for Hook
Thread:	6/0 or 8/0, Color Match Dubbing
Abdomen:	Sow/Scud Dubbing
Shell Back:	Latex Scud Backing
Ribbing:	Red Wire, Brassie



Step 1.
Insert bead on your hook and place it into the vise.



Step 2.
Start your tying thread behind the bead and lay a thread base down the bed of the hook.



Step 3.
Tie in a length of wire at the back of the hook.



Step 4.
(Optional) Tie in a length of scud backing at the back of the hook.



Step 5.
Form a dubbing loop with your tying thread.



Step 6.
Apply a small amount of dubbing wax and touch dub the loop with dubbing.



Step 7.
With your dubbing tool, twist the dubbing into a tight noodle.



Step 8.
Wrap your dubbing loop around the hook to form a football-shaped body. Secure the loop with your tying thread and clip the excess dubbing.



Step 9.
Pull the scud back forward on top of the hook and secure with your tying thread behind the bead. Clip the excess. It is a good idea to put a half hitch knot behind the bead.



Step 10.
Counter wrap the wire forward with evenly-spaced wraps to rib the fly. Secure with the tying thread and clip the excess. Whip finish.



Step 11.
With your bodkin, pick out some of the dubbing on the bottom of the fly to form legs. Go fish!

MNTU 2022 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



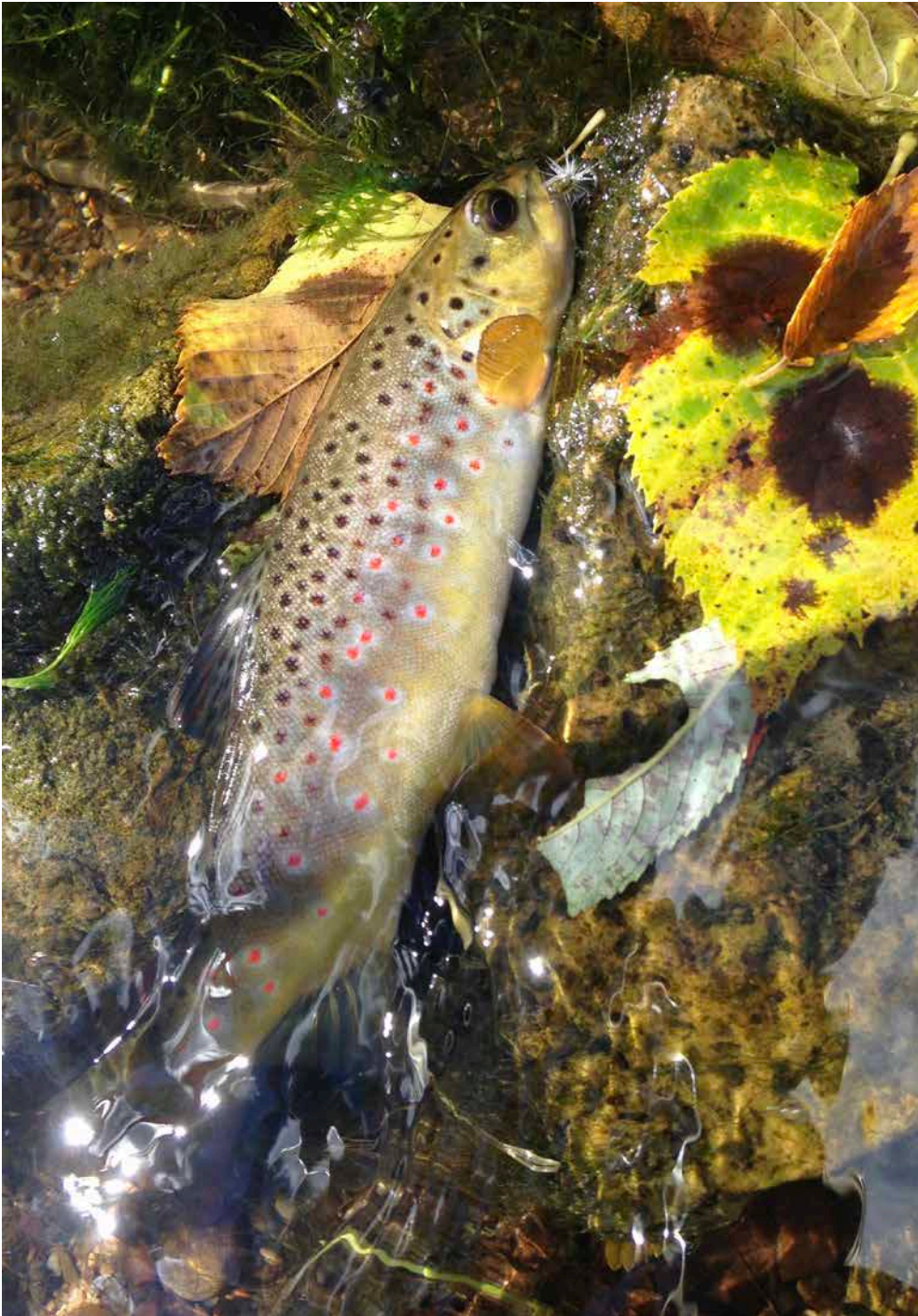
1ST PLACE: RUSH CREEK. PHOTO BY TOM CARPENTER.



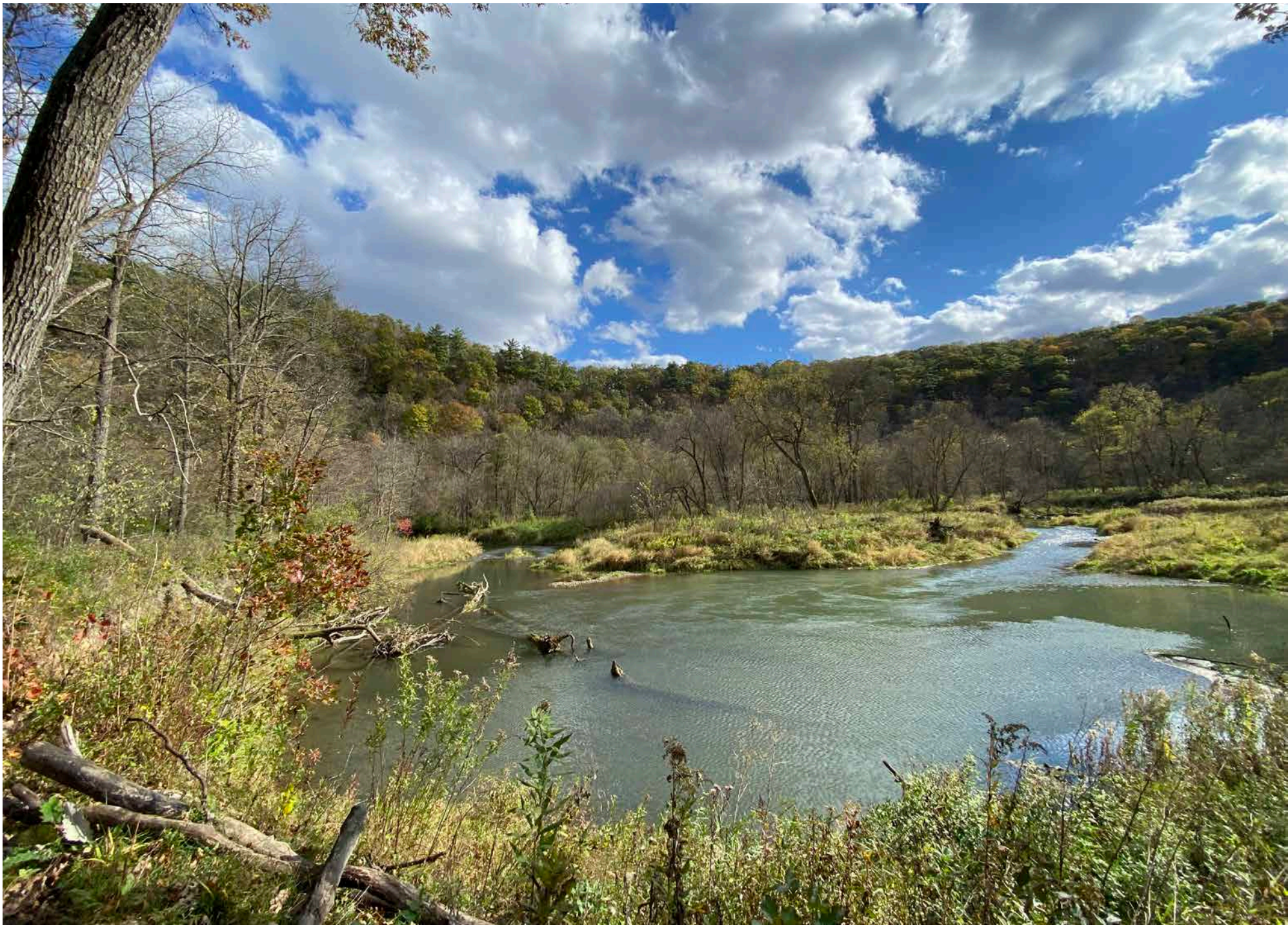
2ND PLACE: CADDIS HATCH ON TROUT RUN. PHOTO BY MICHAEL MELFORD.



LEFT: 3RD PLACE, WHITEWATER RIVER. PHOTO BY TOM WELLE.



RIGHT: 4TH PLACE, WHITEWATER RIVER BROWN TROUT. PHOTO BY MARK SAWINSKI.



HONORABLE MENTION: AUTUMN ON THE NORTH BRANCH OF THE WHITEWATER RIVER. PHOTO BY GARRETT GRABKO.

HONORABLE MENTIONS



ANDY WITH DAUGHTER SADIE ON THE WHITEWATER RIVER.
PHOTO BY DAVE NORLING JR.



MOTHER MELISSA ALBERS AND HER SON MITCHELL.
PHOTO BY LOGAN WEIS.



FATHER AND SON ON THE MIDDLE BRANCH OF THE
WHITEWATER RIVER. PHOTO BY JOHN WEISS.



RUSH CREEK NEAR RUSHFORD.
PHOTO BY EVAN SCHWANKE.

FREE THE KINNI!

2022 UPDATE

By Bob Luck

The Kinnickinnic River rises in a series of large springs north of I-94 in St. Croix County, Wisconsin and flows serenely through fertile, glaciated farmland until it enters the Driftless Area in the city of River Falls. Here the river drops 75 feet over what was once a series of cataracts and rapids prior to the installation of two dams in the early 1900s. Below River Falls, the Kinni settles into a riffle-run-pool sequence as it flows six miles through the “Kinni Canyon,” a gorge uncrossed by roads until it passes below County Highway F and enters Kinnickinnic State Park, a mile upstream from its confluence with the St. Croix. The riparian corridor is a refuge for rare plant communities and wildlife; from wetlands and a trumpeter swan preserve in the headwaters, to oak savannahs filled with songbirds along the Upper Kinni, to goat prairies and boreal forest remnants patrolled by ospreys, fishers and the occasional black bear in the canyon. The river is filled with trout. Electroshocking by the Wisconsin DNR last season showed a population of 6,200 fish per mile in the upper river. The lower Kinni held fewer fish, a still-respectable 3,400 trout per mile, but those fish were larger, with several specimens measuring over 20 inches. I’ve never caught a 20-inch fish in the Kinni myself, but a member of the St. Paul Fly Tying Club showed me a photo of a 22-incher that he pulled out of the river while mousing last summer. I need to get a headlamp. The Wisconsin DNR has classified the entire 25-mile length of the Kinni as a Class I trout stream, and it is the only Outstanding Resource Water in Wisconsin to flow through a city of over 10,000 people. A river like this within an hour’s drive of a population of three million people is nothing short of a miracle, and a key reason I like to brag that I live in the best big city in America for trout anglers.

Over the next several years, we can make this amazing river even better. The River Falls City Council, after a four-year public discussion, voted in 2018 to remove both dams it owns on the river. Powell Falls Dam, the lower, would be removed by 2026. Junction Falls Dam, the upper,

is being relicensed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission until 2046 but could be removed sooner if funding becomes available.

In June 2020, six to eight inches of rain fell in a 24-hour period in the Kinnickinnic watershed. The resulting flood damaged the Powell Falls Dam. Rather than repair it, the city council decided to draw down the impoundment and let the river cut a new channel through the accumulated sediment. Now banks up to 13 feet edge the river above the dam. A non-profit organization, the Kinnickinnic Corridor Collaborative (KinniCC), has been working with the City of River Falls to raise the necessary funds to speed up the dam removal to the winter of 2022-23, to stabilize the banks and remove the built-up sediment, and to restore a mile of publicly accessible stream in the former impoundment. That mile of stream has the bones to be one of the most productive stretches of the entire river, starting with a huge pool at the confluence of the South Fork, and running through a lovely set of runs and riffles. The trout are already moving in: that 22-inch fish mentioned earlier was caught in this stretch of the river.

A long-term monitoring project by the Kiap-TU-Wish chapter of TU has shown that the two impoundments in River Falls warm the summer temperature of the lower river by four degrees compared with the upper river. According to Kiap-TU-Wish monitoring leader Kent Johnson: “Throughout the summer period, the downstream temperature more frequently exceeds the critical temperature thresholds that support healthy coldwater trout and insect communities in the Kinni, and is likely to increase as climate warms. Unless the two dams are removed, trout in the lower Kinni are at risk over time.” Last summer, with the drawdown of the Powell Dam, the monitoring team observed that the temperature difference between the lower and upper rivers shrank by nearly two degrees, good news for coldwater species.

The cost of removing the dam, stabilizing the banks, restoring the stream bed,



EVERETT O'BRIEN TRIES HIS LUCK ON THE LOWER KINNICKINNIC RIVER.

and planting native vegetation in the riparian corridor is estimated at \$3.3 million. Public funds will pay for approximately 2/3 of this amount, with KinniCC leading an effort to raise the remaining \$1 million from private donations. The Kiap-TU-Wish and Twin Cities chapters of TU have agreed to take on the challenge of raising \$200,000 of this amount.

“Getting to this point was the culmination of many peoples’ efforts who all feel passionately about the Kinni,” said Gary Horvath, Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter vice president and a long-time participant in the River Falls dams issue. “I am optimistic that this passion will continue with the fundraising effort and that we may see the dam come out much earlier than expected.”

Bill Kindler, a TCTU member and transplant from Washington State had this to say: “For many years I lived near the Elwha River on the Olympic Peninsula, site of the largest dam removal in U.S. history. Although the dams were removed just recently, in 2012 and 2014, the Elwha is well on the way to restoring itself. Chinook salmon are migrating to long-closed spawning grounds and rainbow trout that were stuck above the dams are running down to the ocean and returning as summer-run steelhead. Eelgrass beds are growing again in the

river's mouth, providing habitat for mollusks and baitfish. I am thrilled to contribute to a dam removal and restoration project on my new home waters.”

Long-time Minnesota TU members, Jim Humphrey and Bill Shogren, wrote in their book, “Trout Streams of Minnesota and Wisconsin” (1995 and 2005): “This is (the authors’) home stream... We’ll give two hours of our lives, anytime, to fish our separate 100 yards of the Kinnickinnic on a sultry summer evening, with rising expectations when the bats begin to play.”

Our fundraising effort is going well, with contributions from chapters throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois, and individual donations ranging from \$10 to \$5,000 from over 100 TU members, but we can use your help! If you wish to support the Kinni, please visit TCTU’s website at <https://twincitiestu.org/kinni> or email me at bob.luck@twincitiestu.org.

Bob Luck is the current Twin Cities Chapter president and an avid angler.



THE POWELL FALLS DAM.

THANK YOU TO OUR RIVERKEEPERS COUNCIL

Minnesota Trout Unlimited appreciates each its nearly 200 generous donors of every amount. Your support makes possible MNTU’s habitat improvement, policy advocacy and education programming. We wish to recognize, especially, the following donors who have given at the Riverkeepers Council level through May, 2022. Thank you to all of our donors!

Anonymous (3)
Stanley "Jay" Anderson
Dr. David and Connie Brockway
Dr. A.S. Cargill
Steve and Amy Carlton
Michael and Katherine Coleman
Jan and Earl Dick
Julie and John Doxsie
Mike and Marie Gallagher
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Patricia E. O’Hara and Peder M. Yurista

We invite you to join the Riverkeepers Council, which recognizes Minnesota Trout Unlimited donors who give \$1,000 or more, to whom we show appreciation through tailored communications, donor impact reports and special invitations. Single or monthly payments are welcomed online at www.mntu.org or by check mailed to MNTU, P.O. Box 845, Chanhassen, MN 55317-0845



Have a Video of a Fly Fishing Adventure?



Content

We are seeking short films and videos that showcase fly fishing in the upper Midwest. Share your experiences of connecting with the water, hooking the big one, or that day when all the fish were rising. We encourage entries that display creativity, adventure, exploration and wise resource use.

Selected films and videos will be screened during an evening event at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo in March 2023..

Rules

- Must be 2-7 minutes long
- Must portray fly fishing in Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Michigan, Ontario and/or Wisconsin
- Any species of fish may be included
- Must contain no copyrighted material without permission
- Must be edited (no uncut video) and have a sound track
- No still photos

Prizes

2022 Prizes Included: Trxstle CRC fly rod transport system, Orvis rod & reel combo, Umpqua tackle pack and Rep Your Water gear. Look for 2023 prize information in early 2023.

To have your video considered, send a YouTube or Vimeo link of it to: videoshowcase@greatwatersflyexpo.com by Saturday, February 11, 2023. Include your phone number with submission.



MNTU EDUCATION UPDATE

JUNE 2022

By Amber Taylor, MNTU Education Program Supervisor



LEFT: THESE MONTICELLO FOURTH GRADERS WERE PUMPED TO RELEASE THE TROUT THEY HAD BEEN RAISING ALL YEAR! THEY ALSO LEARNED HOW TO FLY CAST AND GOT INTO BROWNS CREEK TO CATCH AQUATIC INSECTS AND TEST THE WATER CHEMISTRY. **RIGHT:** TWIN CITIES TU VOLUNTEERS HELPING SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS AT EAGLE RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL IN SAVAGE LEARN HOW TO TIE FLIES.

It was a busy spring for MNTU education! Fly tying programs, trout releases, and MNTU representation at community events couldn't have happened without the funding and volunteer efforts provided by Twin Cities Trout Unlimited members. If you think learning how to tie flies is difficult, try teaching a classroom full of energetic students how to do so in a 50-minute lesson by yourself. The impact of these programs was greatly increased with the presence of dedicated TCTU volunteers, lending a helping hand and sharing their passion with students. Thank you to Ron Seipp, Jay Brunner, John Klesch, Mike Rebeschke, Paul Algren, Joel Wallace, Erik Lommen, Jess Miller, and Cindy Winslow for assisting with these programs! Their support enabled our team to teach almost 600 students how to tie flies.

Students and teachers in central and southern Minnesota began releasing their trout in April, while other schools patiently waited for the snow to melt and release water as Spring took its time showing up throughout the northern part of the state. Our team led activities with

over 800 students during their spring releases at Browns Creek in Stillwater and the Vermillion River in Farmington. These included fly casting, fishing, collecting aquatic insects, testing water quality, conducting habitat surveys, and playing games. A special shout out to Little Falls DNR fisheries manager, Eric Altena, for assisting Bertha-Hewitt TIC students with their trout release. He helped gather and count them at the school, transported them in style with the fisheries truck, and brought fishing rods to teach students how to fish.

We often get asked whether the trout survive. The short answer is that it is unlikely. Ultimately, they are tiny fish at the bottom of the food chain and we assume most do not make it beyond the first few weeks. However, we do hope some of them grow to fishable size! Recently, we learned from the DNR fisheries staff that while doing a shocking survey on Browns creek, they discovered a rainbow trout in their net downstream from where TIC students release their fish. Due to its size, the fish could only have been a TIC fish as they do not stock

rainbows that small in Browns and they are not naturally reproducing.

TCTU volunteers assisted with two community events, including Goodhue's Ag Day and Anoka County's Kids Fishing Clinic. In Goodhue, students learned how to cast a fly rod, what the Streamkeeper team does to monitor water quality in trout waters around Minnesota, and got up close to aquatic insects collected directly from Hay Creek that morning. Many of the students had explored or fished in the creek that MNTU has done so much work restoring.

At the Kids Fishing Clinic, we talked with people about MNTU's work as an organization, led fly casting clinics with families, and promoted our fishing skills programs this summer. Attendees were really excited about our presence and having the opportunity to try casting a fly rod. There were a few young participants that were true naturals, quickly picking it up and making it look easy. More people wanted to learn than we were able to fit in during this event. Thanks to the volunteers that helped make these events

a success: Bob Luck, Jim Sauter, John Klesch, Mike Grengs, and Ken Barry.

At the end of May, we received news that our proposal for education funding from the LCCMR did not pass legislation. As I write this, there are still a lot of unknowns about what happens next. What I do know is our important and impactful education programs that reach thousands of youth and their families each year may come to an end in August. There were 60 Trout in the Classroom schools this year and 15 new teachers looking to join in 2022-2023. Our team has established partnerships with numerous organizations to offer fishing skills programs each summer to introduce new anglers to fly and spin fishing. Volunteer support will be essential in keeping these education programs afloat and moving forward in the coming years.

If you are interested in getting involved or have questions, email education@mntu.org.



LEFT: BERTHA-HEWITT STUDENTS FISH OFF THE DOCK IN CHARLOTTE LAKE NEAR LITTLE FALLS AFTER THEIR TROUT RELEASE. THEY ALSO COLLECTED AND IDENTIFIED AQUATIC INSECTS AND DID A HABITAT HIKE TO ASSESS THE HEALTH OF THEIR TROUT'S NEW HOME. **RIGHT:** A TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM STUDENT HOLDS UP HER TROUT FINGERLINGS BEFORE THEY ARE RELEASED. THIS STUDENT AND HER CLASSMATES CARED FOR THESE TROUT ALL YEAR, STARTING OUT WITH 300 TINY EGGS IN DECEMBER.

YOUTH AND FAMILY FISHING PROGRAMS

2022 TWIN CITIES METRO OPPORTUNITIES

MN Trout Unlimited will be offering Youth and Family Fishing Programs throughout the Twin Cities metro area again this summer. Join us for a few hours of fun, learning, and meeting other anglers! Both spin and fly fishing programs will cover the basics, including how to set up a rod, cast like a pro, and take fish off your hook.

- All equipment is provided.
- Participants over 16 years old will need to buy a MN fishing license.
- The program dates may change with cancellations, additions, and changes in schedules. Check our website for an updated list and links for registration information.
- Email Amber Taylor with questions: education@mntu.org

Date	Time	Location	Program Type	Partner Organization
Sunday, June 12	4:00pm-6:00pm	Holland Lake	Family – Spin	Dakota County Parks and Rec
Tuesday, June 14	10:00am-12:00pm	Tyacke Park	Family – Spin	Burnsville Parks and Rec
Wednesday, June 15	6:00pm-8:00pm	Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park	Women’s (ages 15+) Fly Fishing	Anoka County Parks and Rec
Saturday, June 18	4:00pm-7:00pm	Robert Ney Nature Center	Family – Fly tying & fishing	Wright County Parks and Rec
Saturday, June 25	2:00pm-4:00pm	McCarrons Lake	Youth – Spin	Ramsey County Parks and Rec
Wednesday, July 6	5:00pm-7:00pm	Powderhorn Park	Family – Spin & Fly	Minnesota Valley NWR No registration needed
Thursday, July 7	6:00pm-8:00pm	Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park	Family – Fly	Anoka County Parks and Rec
Saturday, July 16	10:00am-12:00pm	Shady Oak Lake	Family – Spin	Nine Mile Creek WD
Wednesday, July 20	5:00pm-7:00pm	Powderhorn Park	Family – Spin & Fly	Minnesota Valley NWR No registration needed
Thursday, July 28	6:00pm-8:00pm	Thompson County Park	Family – Spin	Dakota County Parks and Rec
Saturday, July 30	2:00pm-4:00pm	Fairhaven Mill Park	Family – Fly	Wright County Parks and Rec
Wednesday, August 3	5:00pm-7:00pm	Powderhorn Park	Family – Spin & Fly	Minnesota Valley NWR No registration needed
Thursday, August 4	10:00am-12:00pm	Tyacke Park	Youth – Spin	Burnsville Parks and Rec
Thursday, August 4	2:00pm-4:00pm	Bertram Chain of Lakes	Youth - Spin	4H Club – Wright County
Saturday, August 6	10:00am-12:00pm	Verderosa Avenue & 494 -Mississippi River	Family – Spin	South St. Paul Parks and Rec
Saturday, August 6	2:00pm-4:00pm	Spoon Lake	Youth - Fly	Ramsey County Parks and Rec
Tuesday, August 9	10:00am-12:00pm	Tyacke Park	Family – Spin	Burnsville Parks and Rec
Saturday, August 13	10:00am-12:00pm	Bush Lake	Family – Spin	Nine Mile Creek WD
Tuesday, August 23	6:00pm-8:00pm	Thompson County Park	Family – Spin	Dakota County Parks and Rec

RUSH CREEK

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

By Dustan Hoffman, MNTU Habitat Project Manager

Minnesota Trout Unlimited (MNTU) has partnered up for yet another Habitat Improvement (HI) project in southeast Minnesota. Working closely with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to identify priority HI project sites, it made sense to identify and prioritize a project in the upper reaches of Rush Creek's watershed. The amount of HI projects previously completed on Rush Creek spanning from 2008 to today add up to approximately 6.5 miles in stream length. Add to this the large amount of DNR-owned Aquatic Management Area angler access easements measuring over 15 miles, it becomes easy to justify why working on Rush Creek was a priority for MNTU and the DNR.

During the summer of 2021, the initial installation of construction was completed on a 4,249-foot section of Rush Creek downstream from the bridge on Winona County Road 29. The project was primarily funded by an Outdoor Heritage Fund grant. Additional funding was provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which helped pay for construction costs and rock used in the project. Landowner partnerships for this project played a key role in the addition of non-game habitat included in the project and locating placement sites for soils removed from high eroding banks. The local MNTU Chapters were partners as well, with Win-Cres and Hiawatha Chapter volunteers building three sets of lunger structures that will benefit volunteers on future angling adventures.

With the initial installation completed in 2021, MNTU staff, the contracted project designer, and the contracted construction company all participated in a 2022 spring site visit to identify areas where adjustments may be needed. MNTU's contracts contain three-year maintenance provisions for a couple of reasons. The ground and soil settle and move quite a bit following the initial installation, so MNTU holds the contractors accountable for repairing areas where soil has settled, rocks have shifted during spring frost heaving and re-seeding areas where vegetation did not thrive. It is expected in the first year after initial installation that there will be some minor adjustments to make on HI projects as everything settles in. MNTU also requires contractors to manage vegetation for three years until it is well established and the project completed. Contractors mow the HI project sites for two years following initial installation and spot treat invasive species. Mowing at the correct time during the summer helps to remove the seed heads of non-native vegetation so they do not proliferate, but mowing also gives the native species seeded a chance to shoot up above the cover crop species in the seed mix. It's important to have a cover crop species like Canada rye in the seed mix, because they grow quickly and that helps hold soils in place during the following year's spring run-off events.



RUSH CREEK BEFORE AND AFTER HIGH BANK SOIL WAS REMOVED TO CREATE HABITAT FOR SWALLOWS.

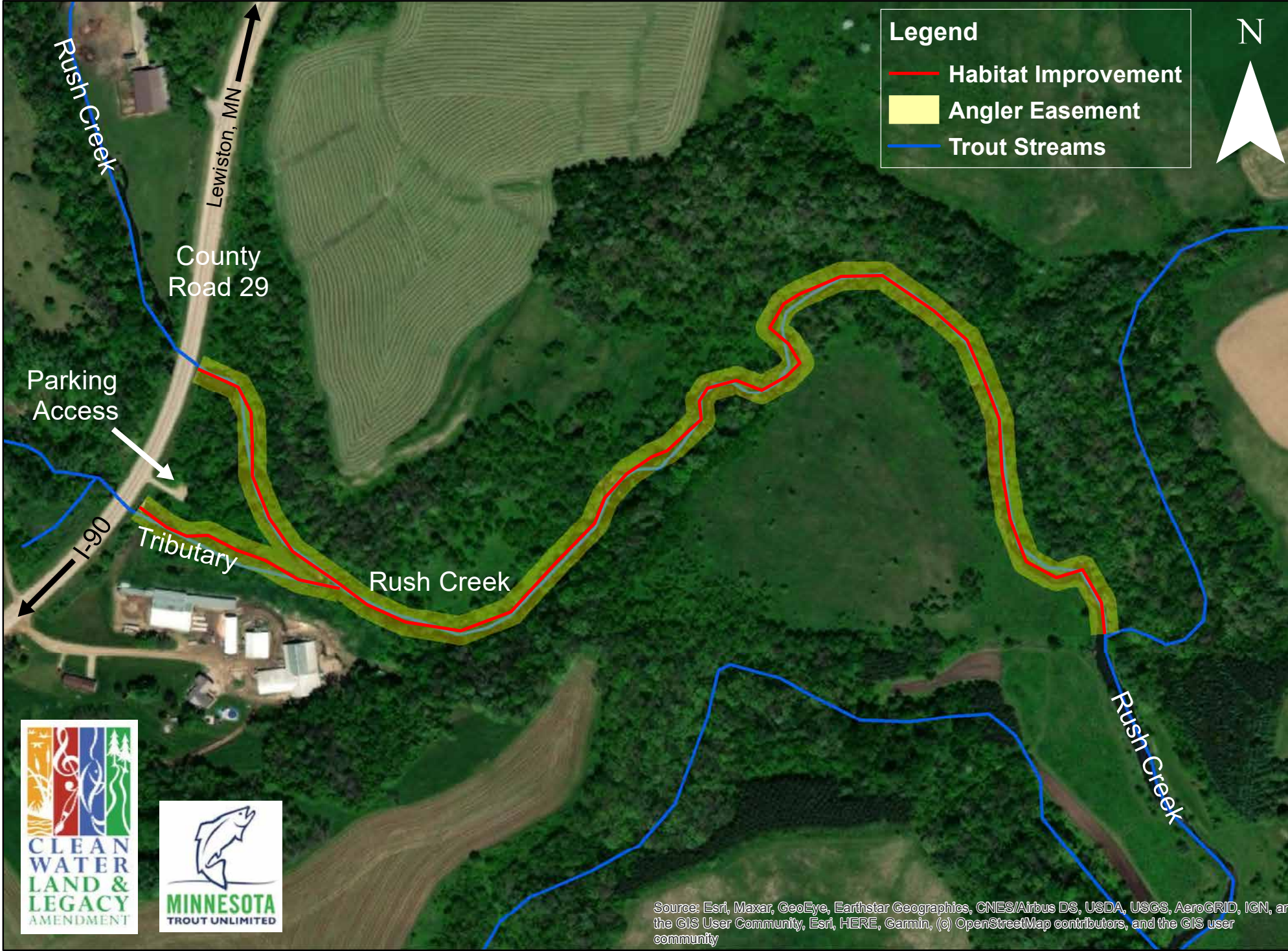
MNTU has been incorporating non-game habitat into most of their recent HI projects in southeast MN. What is non-game habitat you may ask? Non-game habitat focuses on species other than those the trout anglers are seeking. Two specific types of non-game habitat were installed in the Rush Creek HI project, though other aspects like adding pollinator species in the seed mix also benefit other species. Wetland scrapes were installed at three sites throughout the project to attract turtles, frogs, and toads. American toads were observed using one of the scrapes in May. Two sites on this project focused on mounding excess soils removed from the high streambanks at locations outside of the floodplain where

bank nesting bird species like bank swallows and belted kingfishers were hoped to use the habitat. In early May 2022, HI project designer Mike Majeski documented a pair of northern rough-winged swallows creating a nesting cavity in one of the mound's vertically cut faces. Mike stated, "It is very encouraging to see swallows using this location in the first nesting season, we will likely have to perform some type of maintenance to retain this habitat, but seeing it used in the first year is awesome."

It's very rewarding to see and hear about the variety of successes these southeast Minnesota HI projects are bringing to wildlife and the public. Recently dur-

ing a phone call with one of the Rush Creek HI project landowners, it put a warm smile on my face to hear them say how happy they were to see such a variety of habitat approaches incorporated into our projects, and that they were glad MNTU was thinking beyond just trout. With that being said, it's a great time to remind people that although trout fishing often makes way for other hobbies like foraging for mushrooms and wild edibles, we need to remember that angling easements are only for angling. We need to be considerate and respectful of the landowners who take part in the DNR's angler easement program, and not help ourselves to anything more than angling and enjoying the scenery.

Rush Creek Habitat Improvement Project Site



NEW ROD

By Meckenna Holman

I married into a fishing family. And somehow, with my paltry knowledge of fish and hooks, I was promoted from a Shakespeare rod to a fly fishing rod purchased at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo.

Somewhere in the middle of those two rods, I caught the largest fish in my life: a northern pike up at Camden State Park in Minnesota. We let it go within minutes. Confused, I did not yet realize the boniness of a pike made for undesirable eating, unless pickled into a globby mess and compressed in a mason jar. After that eating experience though, I never hoped to catch a northern pike again in my lifetime.

I also had my husband bait my hook every single time, no less remove the caught fish every single time, too. The spikes terrified me, and I could never quite get the smoothness of a pumpkin-seed fin to face downward.

The fly fishing rod felt impossible to maneuver. My husband and I stood in open fields whipping the lead and rod back and forth. 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock, over and over. An instructor at the Expo mentioned that sometimes fly fishers look like ribbon dancers, and I felt like it, too. Actually, ribbon dancing still felt more familiar than any other element of fly fishing, so I kept moving at 10 and 2,

hoping I looked good.

I can't really see fish either when I look into a river. Countless times, my husband has grabbed me close and pointed toward a nondescript eddy in a river, and I've leaned over the bank, staring.

He's even shoved his polarized sporting sunglasses on my face, and exclaimed, "Now? Do you see them now?"

And usually, I'll be frank, I can't. Like I said, I married into a fishing family.

The new rod, the flying fishing rod, made its official debut, other than the periodic playset equipment and soccer field, in the Driftless region of southern Minnesota. On an early spring day we drove out of the Twin Cities, into what I had once deemed as the boring part of our state. Except now, apparently, those little streams and creeks, what I previously assumed were irrigation ditches, were teeming with trout.

Unlike the murky waters of the Twin Cities, I could see straight to the bottom and hundreds of light bodies darting up and down stream when the sun hit just right. I tried my hand at the fly fishing rod and had far more success in wide parts of the river rather than narrow spots with overhangs. I'd like to think I presented the wet nymph fly nicely for the nervous

fish, but just about every time I took a step forward in my waders or leaned over the side of the bank, I could see the trout shooting away from me, or plumes of sand were disrupted below my feet.

I didn't catch a thing that day—well, other than long grass on the embankment. My husband did though, two tiny little brown trout, and I got to take one off its hook. No spikes, which is a fact every person in my family has failed to mention until now. The little fish felt like a big minnow in my hands.

I'm not really sure what the next step is for someone like me who didn't grow up fishing. I suppose I could muster the gumption to rip a worm in half or handle a bluegill like I'm in charge, or maybe I'll just keep trying this whole fly fishing thing.

You'll be proud to know I'm learning fly fishing etiquette: don't talk too loudly, don't wade into the entire river, don't stand on the bank in front of another fly angler or the fish will spot you, stay clear of others and trees. I'm coming along quite nicely as a fly fisherwoman, if you ask me.

I've heard, too, that fishermen don't really share their exact locations for fishing, especially trout fishing. That's hard for me to do, but I'll try to keep my lips



Above: One of two small brown trout caught that day. No spikes!

sealed—except Camden State Park just around the bend to the left of the last Equestrian campsite: There's a northern pike there, just waiting to be pickled.

Meckenna Holman is an English teacher by day, and a hobbyist and writer in her evenings. During her free time, Meckenna and her husband juggle a host of hobbies: coffee roasting, beer brewing, biking, camping, gardening, and, as of late, fly fishing.

HIS LAST CROSSING

REMEMBERING PHIL TOFFOLI

By Bob Wagner

Phil Toffoli and I shared a lot of stories over 22 years of our fishing friendship. The last story Phil shared “His Last Crossing” was a week before his death on October 4, 2021. This last story was almost predictable and so symbolic of a 60 year love affair with North Shore steelhead. Phil especially loved the upper Knife River, the parts that were secluded, with no roads, no houses, and usually no anglers. Just a beautiful, wild river. He shared and taught me the fun of chasing steelhead, its beauty, challenge, solitude, and secret runs. He also shared his favorite spots to find agates. Even though his health, his balance, and his whole body was failing, he had to go back one last time. The title of this story was a real life experience, an unfortunate but poignant truth we all have to face. Listening to his story I felt a strange degree of humbled honor.

Michele, Phil's wife, called me a week prior to the funeral. She knew Phil and I fished together a lot. I greatly appreciated her call though it was difficult and sad. It was also ironic in the fact that she reached me on the Bois Brule river. Phil was the first person to introduce me to the Bois Brule. He spent most of that day showing me the best spots he learned over thirty years of great fishing with fewer people and more fish. There's something in the eyes and voice of an “Old Time Steelheader” remembering the massive runs of chrome in the 60s and 70s. It reminded me of my father's stories of the Bois Brule as a young teenage boy in the early 1920s. My father only spent two summers of his entire youth fishing the Bois Brule. However, his remembrances from those two years dominated the stories of his entire youth as told to me and my four brothers. Phil and my father's experience were similar, no cell phones, no drones and usually no cameras. Their eyes, ears and memories recorded all the sights, sounds and action of the early fishing adventures.

There's a unique, captivating quality I remember about both my father's and Phil's stories of catching trout in pristine rivers. I believe this quality relates to the person-to-person connection you just can't capture on film or video. There is something deeply ingrained in our DNA and history regarding the unique communication of sharing stories eye to eye.

I'll never forget the day when three friends and I met Phil. Twenty-two years ago, four friends from Bemidji with little to no steelhead experience were packing up. Cindy, Jill, Rose and Val, the four wives, were all laughing their butts off at us and the mountain of gear we were trying to cram into my van. It was a hilarious scene of over-planning colliding with inexperience at 7:00am. A huge pile of gear for a three day trip that could outfit half of the British army. Yes, I was excited, for 25 years I had dreamed of fishing steelhead on a wild and beautiful North Shore river. On that very spring day we met Phil the “old time steelheader” and the significance of it would fundamentally shape the rest of my life!



PHIL TOFFOLI AND HIS FAVORITE CATCH, NORTH SHORE STEELHEAD.

I often describe meeting Phil, as the Gander Mountain drug deal day. Checking out at Gander in Duluth, the cashier lady says I should have great luck fishing because her husband has already caught 12 steelhead that week. I told her he's the guy we need to hire and asked if I could have his phone number. As she's writing his number down, in walks her husband, Phil Toffoli. My three buddies are in the van waiting for me. Phil and I walk out of Gander to the back of his truck where he showed me how to tie spawn bags. Phil drops the tailgate on his old truck and it's covered in fish guts, slime and eggs. I'm thinking that this guy definitely knows how to catch fish. Phil quickly realizes he should drive to our hotel and show all four of us how to tie spawn bags. Phil asked about the size of our nets and I said we only had small ones. Phil said he could pick some up and bring them to the hotel. I agreed and gave Phil \$50 to pick up two larger nets. I go back to the van where my buddies had just watched this transaction of me giving money to a complete stranger. Of course they said “What the hell was going on at the back of that pickup? It looked like a drug deal!” I explained emphatically “It was not a drug deal, but that was Phil and he is going to buy us two steelhead nets and come to our hotel and teach us how to tie spawn bags, plus hopefully guide us to some steelhead water.” As expected, my buddies were not as confident as I was that this stranger called Phil I met ten minutes ago would actually show up.

Thankfully, Phil did arrive with two steelhead nets and would not accept money to guide us, but decided he liked us and would show us a couple of spots on the Knife River. Thanks to Phil's steelhead skills and extensive Knife River experience, we all caught chrome that first weekend.

Two of my friends, Jeff and John, really enjoyed it and came back several

times to steelhead fish. I, on the other hand, was totally smitten by the chrome mermaid of the North Shore. Phil and I became close friends and fished every spring for a dozen years, and kept in touch for 22 years. We met and fished with each other's families and we did some longer overnight trips. We discovered Phil was a natural mentor and really enjoyed teaching almost as much as catching. Phil was a unique, honest, generous, full-blood Italian, and an “Old Time Steelheader.” “Old Time” because he was there on the Knife River fishing the massive runs of the late 60s and 70s. Was Phil perfect, no, none of us are but, he was a wonderful steelhead friend. He explained after one steelhead outing that being dyslexic, his fishing rod was his escape from a sometimes cruel, always frustrating youth and school experiences. He said when he was in school his teachers didn't know what dyslexia was, so he was labeled dumb, slow and challenged. He explained to me that fishing was his great refuge, an immediate form of therapy he desperately needed. Phil was not dumb, he was expressive and kind, and patiently explained over several years the various types of steelhead water: runs, lies, pocket water, holding areas, traveling water and the corresponding fishing techniques. He also shared important differences in river systems on the North Shore. Rivers clear, drain, drop and warm at different rates, which impacts the fishing,

A few years after meeting Phil, I started a youth fly fishing program with Trout Unlimited, in part because of Phil's example in mentoring and encouraging my fishing skills. This program has run for 18 years serving approximately 900 youth. My two friends Jeff and John who also fished with Phil have been excellent Trout Unlimited volunteers in this same program mentoring youth. Consequently, Phil's mentoring is being replicated over and over. As I explained at his funeral, this is a unique and important part

of his legacy, the “gift” of mentoring. In our Trout Unlimited chapter we call it “The Future of Fly Fishing.” This gift of teaching and mentoring adults, youth, young and old builds the respect and appreciation necessary for dedicated advocates to sustain this sport and resource into the future.

About four weeks before Phil's passing he described to me his “last crossing” experience steelheading on his beloved Knife River. Even with failing health he decided to visit the upper Knife. He shared his struggle crossing over the river to reach a favorite spot, only to realize when he arrived that he was physically weakened and could not make it back. A difficult reality, especially for a man whose life was all about hunting and fishing. Fortunately, Phil always carried a compass, though he did not want to use it, he had no choice. It meant shooting a compass line over and over and walking two or three extra miles. That walk through the woods was long and tough. Exhausted, dripping in sweat and carrying all his fishing gear, he came to a dirt road. Shortly after, a kind lady picked him up and drove him back to his truck. It was sad to hear the story of his last crossing but he added that he had 60 years of good friends and cherished memories on beautiful North Shore rivers.

I'm very grateful to Phil, Michele, brother John and son Joey for allowing me to be a small part of their fishing family. Consequently my wife Val, our kids and grandkids all enjoy this great sport. My fishing experience and life has been significantly enriched by an “Old Time Steelheader's” decision to mentor and share. In turn, I hope all of us fisherpersons take the time to share and pass it along to others.

Bob Wagner is a Headwaters TU Chapter board member and past president. He lives outside Bemidji with his wife and fishing partner Val.

BOOK REVIEW

TROUT TIPS

By John Weiss

So there I was on a perfect early-winter day on the Whitewater River, a #18 Green Hornet nymph on my tippet with a #20 Zebra Midge dropper—a perfect combination for winter fishing.

Where were the trout?

Alas, no-shows. Obviously, I had to change flies but then, a little voice told me: not so fast. I just finished reading Trout Unlimited’s new book *Trout Tips*, that includes more than 250 insights from TU members, from CEO Chris Wood on down to locals. One of them had jumped out at me on page 146: “Trust the Fly” when Dave Cohen writes of what he learned from an Alaskan guide: only “after lengthening or shortening the leader, adding or subtracting split shot, or moving a strike indicator does he ever change the fly. The pattern may matter, he said, but presentation always matters more.”

Okay, I took out my new tin split shot and added just a tiny bit of weight then changed places to a deeper, slower pool. Within 10 minutes, I landed a eight-incher and after that, added a brown in the low-teens.

Light was fading but my day had brightened.

On a good day, with wind to my back and sun in my face, I’m average. One bad days? Don’t ask.

That’s a cool thing about the book, I learned a lot and could see a beginner getting all kinds of good advice and even a top-notch angler finding some bon mots.

The book is divided into sections dealing with gear, reading the water etc. but frankly, I can open it to any page and find a little wisdom. In fact, it was hard for me to read too much because I was flooded with insights, more than I could ever digest at once. I plan to reread it again on a cold, snowy winters afternoon and write down maybe ten things that I believe will help me right now.

What was hard for me to digest was that not all seemed to agree. At first, I was miffed—please don’t confuse me more than I already am, I pleaded. But that’s to be expected. How often do two really good trout anglers agree on everything? We all have our own little ways of doing things, for whatever reason, so why should all 250 plus tips agree. And for some, it’s more a matter of nuance.

For example, one on page 71 reads “Don’t be afraid to change your fly.... Sticking with a dud fly won’t produce fishing fun.”

Is that diametrically opposed to the one of page 146? Sort of, but then, the Alaskan guide didn’t say NEVER

change flies, just rule out other factors first.

Another was to always place your “ace” cast first, go to the place that looks sweetest.

Obviously.

But others say don’t forget skinny water, don’t head for the middle with walking or casting before trying shallows because any fish there knows it’s more vulnerable to predators so it must be really hungry. And we all love hungry fish.

Again, I’m guessing they are more nuances, cast in ice not in stone.

One section is near and dear to Vaughn Snook of the DNR in Lanesboro. It’s on page 99 and the headline is “Wood is good, foam is home;” that is one of Snook’s favorite sayings. I’ve taken that to heart, at least the foam part, but I’m still working on getting fish in wood because I too often get snagged. Bye-bye fish, fly and tippet.

Here are a few more I took to heart because of where I am in the endless journey to fishing perfection:

False cast off to the side maybe three to four feet. On the final cast, drop the fly where you want it to not spook the trout.

When a lot of options present themselves, such as grasshoppers being slurped up like Big Macs, as well as flies rising and fish feeding on the bottom, fish the biggest, meatiest fly first and work your way down to the smallest.

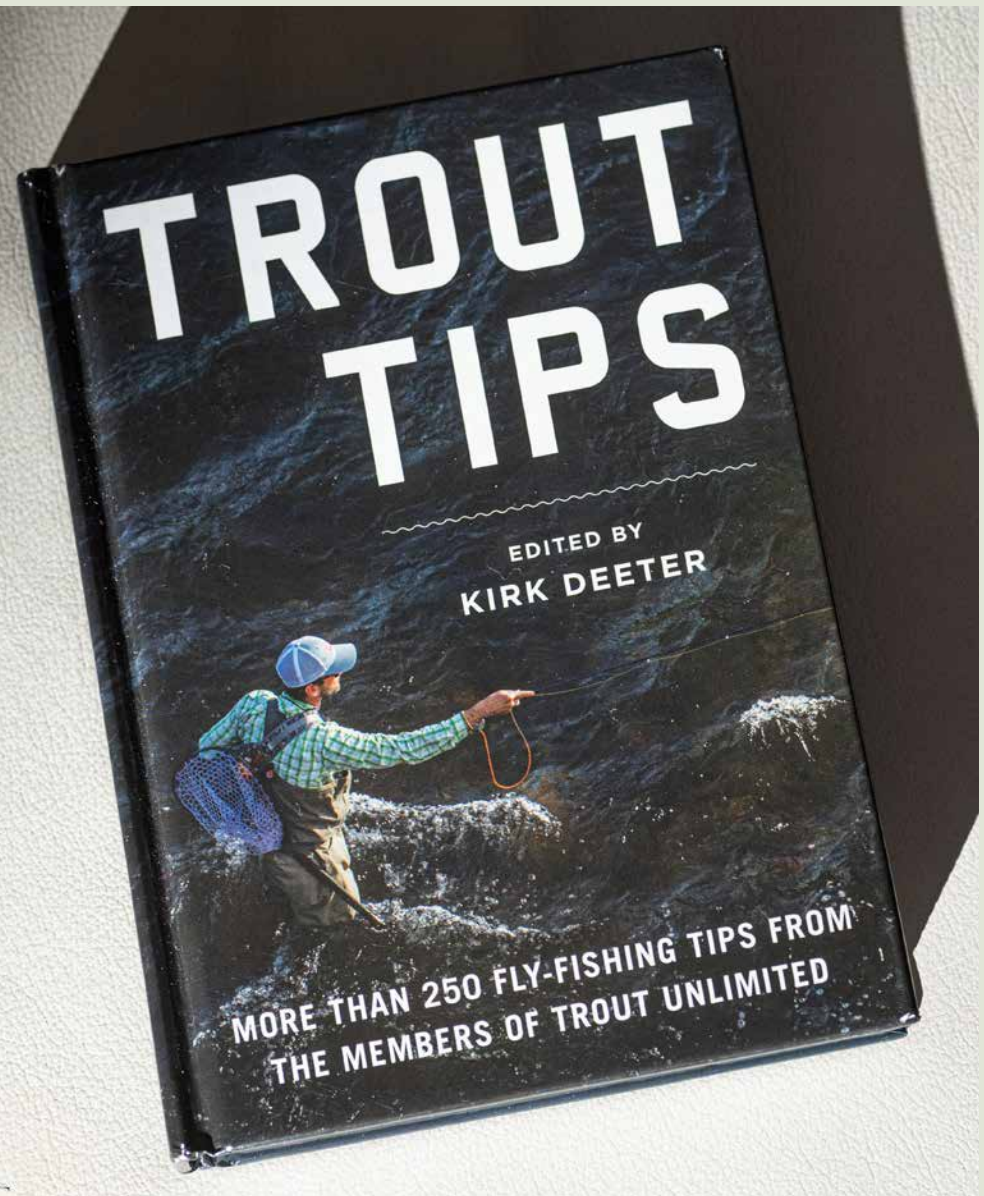
This is a real favorite: “Sometimes the rattier a fly is, after it gets chewed on a few times, the better it works.” I once had a bass popper fly that outfished every other popper. It looked like a frog but the bass soon ripped off the legs then the front whiskers but still it worked best. I finally had to get rid of it when the body was torn off and I had only a hook. But then, maybe the rattiest flies work best because they are the ones working best that day, the ones that get hit, twisted and chewed on.

All fish love change. The more changes in depth, color, substrate, water speed etc. the better chances of finding fish.

Read the water vertically as well as horizontally. Factor in how fast water is moving on the bottom and middle as well as surface.

One of the absolute best ones: “You need to check your ego as the door and be prepared to switch patterns.” This tip author suggests making one right-on cast when sight fishing a big brown and if that doesn’t work, wait several minutes and tie on another fly. Do it again and again. “Follow the will of the trout and don’t try to impose your will on them.”

My favorite for 2022 open-water fishing is on page 34 and it’s called “One Simple



Move, One Simple Fly.” It reads: “If you can roll cast and know how to swing a soft hackle, you may not catch every fish in the stream, but you will always be in the game.” - Greg Potter.

For the past few years, I’ve been working on nymphs but now it’s soft-hackle time.

John Weiss was a reporter/photographer for the Rochester Post/Bulletin for 41 years and still does freelance. He has been an outdoors writer in the Driftless nearly 46 years. He is secretary for Hiawatha TU and loves fly fishing small streams.

SOUTH BRANCH OF THE ROOT RIVER

FISHING THE LARGEST TROUT STREAM IN THE DRIFTLESS

By Carl Haensel



THE DAM ON THE SOUTH BRANCH OF THE ROOT RIVER IN THE TOWN OF LANESBORO IS A SCENIC FOCAL POINT AND GOOD SPOT TO WET A LINE.

The South Branch of the Root River is unmistakably the largest trout stream in the Driftless Region. This large size is due to a geologic anomaly at the top of the trout-holding section of the river: Mystery Cave. Above the cave, the stream is not trout water. If you visit the cave, which is well worth touring, you will cross the river as you walk from the parking area to the cave entrance. While it looks good, leave your fly rods in your car, since the warm waters hold mostly suckers and a variety of minnow species. As the river passes near the cave, much of it waterfalls through cracks in the limestone bedrock and then percolates through the longest cave in Minnesota. Thirteen miles of passages have been explored, and more certainly exist. The temperature inside the cave is a constant 48°F the entire year. As the water flows through the cave, it chills and eventually makes its way out of the cavern system a few miles east of the entrance at Seven Springs. A wildlife management area protects the springs in addition to the cave system. From this point until the stream joins the North Branch of the Root River downstream of Lanesboro, it is quality trout water. Fed additionally by numerous excellent trout streams and springs, it stays cold and fishable through the summer. A healthy forage base in the river grows trout quickly. In addition to wild trout, the DNR stocks large quantities of fingerling brown trout and catchable rainbows in the river. Smaller quantities of brookies have been stocked in the Seven Springs area. After a season of growth, it's nearly impossible to tell the fingerling brown trout from wild fish. Parking is available along the road on County Road 5 to access Seven Springs, and the fishing can be pleasant through pasture and meadows.

Downstream, the next best access to the river can be had at Maple Road. A 454-acre expansion of Forestville State Park in 2012 secured this area for public use, adding nearly two miles of river frontage. One of the most scenic reaches of the river, towering bluffs line the valley, making for a stunning backdrop whenever you're casting a fly. The fishing can be good as well, and I've had plenty of luck downstream of the bridge exploring the water with my brother and father over the years. To be honest, my brother Matt may have caught more trout the last time we were there, but I'd like to think that was because he took off at a fast clip toward the stream the moment we parked the car. I played catch-up through the morning as we worked the deep pools and riffles, picking up plenty of fish. Overall, the trout numbers here don't tend to be quite as high as in other areas, but the scenery will more than compensate.

The primary access in the heart of Forestville State Park is not far from Maple Road as the crow flies, just over some bluffs towering hundreds of feet above the river. Enter the park from the west past the main entrance—the bridge at Forestville is permanently closed to vehicle traffic. Good trail access throughout the park will get anglers on the water with dedicated angler parking just south of the amphitheater in the park. I've stayed in the park campground and had great experiences fishing on the water until the night grew inky black. With far fewer mosquitoes than up north, this is a great location to stay in if you're intent on fishing the South Branch or other nearby waters. The park reach of the river is likely the most heavily fished section, and you're sure to encounter other anglers. Bait is allowed in this reach, but

protective regulations keep trout from 12 to 16 inches safe. The river hosts a mixture of stocked and wild trout, with wild browns filtering in from Canfield Creek and Forestville Creek in the park. I tend to fish the deep, fast runs through the park to take active fish during the spring and summer. Streamers have never been as successful here for me, likely because the trout see plenty of Panther Martin and Mepps models before I get there.

Past the park, the South Branch flows out of the hills and through a broad valley. The river braids into multiple channels in the valley, though plenty of sharp bends keep the habitat interesting if you decide to hike in on that reach. It passes the bridge at Carimona, providing some access, though the reach upstream has been posted against trespass in the past.

No fishing easements are currently held in this reach either upstream or downstream of the bridge. The first section downstream is decidedly flat, straight and boring. Skip it and work further if your legs will allow you to reach some nice bends and deep holes. It can be hard to decide what to fish, and on big water like the South Branch, it pays dividends to avoid fishing water that is poor. Further downstream, the river nears Preston and livens up, flowing through quality holes that host good brown trout and rainbows. Willow Creek enters in this reach, regularly contributing some additional stocked fish into the mix. Plenty of easy access and good fishing can be had throughout. At the end of town, Camp Creek dumps into the South Branch at an excellent access point where you could launch a canoe or kayak if you wanted



SOUTH BRANCH RIFFLES AND RUNS HOLD BROWN TROUT FROM FORESTVILLE STATE PARK ALL THE WAY TO THE CONFLUENCE WITH THE NORTH BRANCH OF THE ROOT RIVER. FLOATING THE RIVER IS A GREAT WAY TO EXPLORE THE WATER AND SKIP LESS PRODUCTIVE REACHES.

to explore the river more quickly from a boat. If you don't have a craft, check in with Mel Hayner at the Driftless Fly Fishing Company, and he'll set you up with a great Jackson kayak to navigate the river. Be sure to use a floatation device any time you're on the water. I like to wear an inflatable life jacket powered by a CO2 cartridge. The water can be cold, and it's required by law to have a personal floatation device on board your boat.

Once the South Branch flows under US Hwy 52, it leaves easy access behind for a time—unless you're on the Root River State Trail. The trail is designed for bicyclists, and is a beautiful, asphalt path that crosses the river numerous times on old railroad bridges as it follows the river down the valley towards Lanesboro. Parking is available in Preston and you can walk or bike the trail downstream on the South Branch or upstream on Camp Creek, as the trail winds toward Harmony. I've thoroughly enjoyed the times I've pulled on my waders, grabbed my rod and hopped on my bike to reach sections of the river that few other anglers visit. Just stash your bike off the trail and hop down to some excellent fishing opportunities. The next easy road access point is about five miles down the bike path at the Old Barn Resort. There you'll find camping, an epically huge historic barn, some great food and easy river access through their golf course. The burgers are good, and the camping is set up for RV users primarily, though they've always been happy to accommodate tent campers as well. The golf course, at best, provides some open backcast space. Golf courses are never good for trout streams, and always, without question, contribute herbicide and pesticide runoff to the watershed. The entire reach of the river through the resort has fishing easement, so you're welcome to fish to your heart's content. There aren't as many riffle points and runs in this reach of the river, so you're best off walking along the water until you find one.

As the South Branch moves down the watershed, active trout tend to cluster toward spring inputs of cold water and riffle points and runs that provide good feeding lies and oxygen. Find those, and you'll likely find some good fish. The river is large enough that sometimes it feels like there's too much water to work, especially if you're throwing small nymphs. Try tying on a larger streamer and covering water in this area if nothing else is producing for you. I've had days that were phenomenal, and days when the fishing was challenging.

The river keeps winding downstream toward Lanesboro past the Old Barn, with the bike trail making a couple of more river crossings before closely following the river into town. This roughly five mile reach of the river features some flat, boring stretches interspersed with quality riffles, runs and bends. Anglers traveling by car instead of by bike or boat will find parking at the Grit Road bridge, with easement and some nice bends not quite a half-mile hike up the bike trail to the north. You'll have to cover the water to find the fish, but big trout have been taken in this reach in the past.

As the South Branch of the Root River enters the town of Lanesboro, it cascades over a large dam, dropping 25 feet over the structure built in 1868. Unique in construction, the dam is made of unmortared limestone blocks, and is one of only six gravity arch dams remaining in the United States. The dam continues to generate electricity, powering ten percent of the homes in the small city. Stabilization and renovation work began in 2020, with the city and state planning to retain the dam in perpetuity. For anglers, the dam is a giant fish blockage, keeping trout that ascend the lower river from migrating further upstream. At times you can stop in the parking lot and watch big trout trying in vain to get up the river as they leap into the falls. The fishing from the dam downstream through town can be good at times, though no special regu-

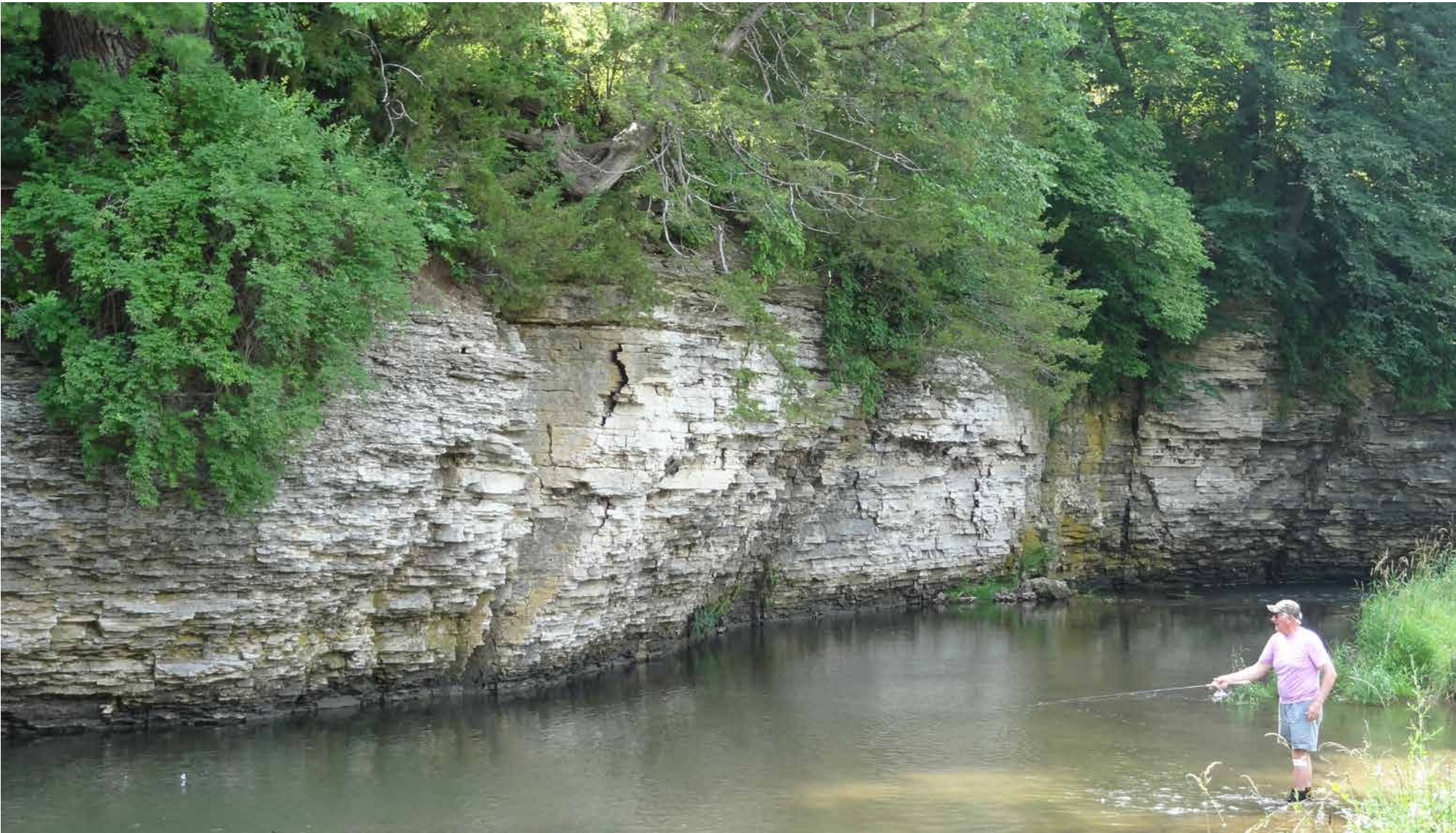


THE SOUTH BRANCH OF THE ROOT RIVER FLOWS THROUGH MYSTERY CAVE UPSTREAM OF PRESTON. ABOVE THE CAVE, IT HAS POOR QUALITY TROUT WATER BUT THE COOLING EFFECTS OF THE CAVERNS ENSURE PLENTY OF COLD WATER IN THE RIVER WHEN IT EXITS. STUNNING FORMATIONS ARE WORTH VIEWING ON CAVE TOURS IN FORESTVILLE/MYSTERY CAVE STATE PARK.

lations protect the water below the dam. Large, and occasionally heavily influenced by rainfall events, the river is well worth your time as it heads downstream to the confluence with the North Branch of the Root. There are times I've brought a ten-foot 7-weight fly rod just to be able to make the casts and drifts on this lower end of the river. The fish will take the same nymphs that you can catch them on further upstream in the watershed, but you'll have to work to get the flies to the

fish. Make sure to stop in at Root River Rod Co. in the heart of town to check in on the current hot flies and see what's working on not only the South Branch but all the surrounding Driftless streams as well.

Carl Haensel is the Northern Minnesota Chair of MNTU and resides in Duluth. This article is an excerpt of his upcoming book Fly Fishing Minnesota. Find more information at www.namebini.com



THE AUTHOR'S FATHER, PAUL HAENSEL, FISHES A DEEP RUN ON THE SOUTH BRANCH OF THE ROOT RIVER.

INCLUDING MNTU IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING

Any loss in a family is challenging. It's much easier to delay answering uncomfortable questions such as, "What happens to my assets and my loved ones when I or my partner dies?" So it's no surprise that roughly half of Americans don't have a will, and even fewer have an estate plan. While it is a hard subject to discuss, an estate plan goes much further than a will. Not only does it deal with the distribution of assets and legacy wishes, but it may help you and your heirs pay substantially less in taxes, fees, and court costs, as well as benefit the people and causes that you care about.

Including MNTU in your estate plans not only helps to provide for future programmatic and organizational security, it can take many different forms to balance your financial and philanthropic goals. Drafting these documents may seem like a daunting task at first, until you realize all the good that comes from having them. A gift in your will or living trust lets you make a meaningful gift to MNTU with ease and be flexible in your commitment. You can give cash, specific property or a percentage of your estate, with restrictions or without. You can also make MNTU a beneficiary of your

401k, IRA or life insurance policy. Because your gift doesn't come to MNTU until after your lifetime, you can change your mind at any time. To make sure your will accomplishes your goals according to your wishes, we recommend that you obtain the professional counsel of an attorney who specializes in estate planning. We've included specific bequest language below for usage with individual or estate planning.

Bequest Language

The official bequest language for Minnesota Trout Unlimited is:

Unrestricted General Legacy:

"I give Minnesota Trout Unlimited, a Minnesota non-profit corporation, presently at P.O. Box 845, Chanhassen, MN 55317-0845, EIN# 52-1766036, the sum of (dollar amount)/ or percentage of (___%)/ residue of my estate to be used at the discretion of its governing board."

Specific:

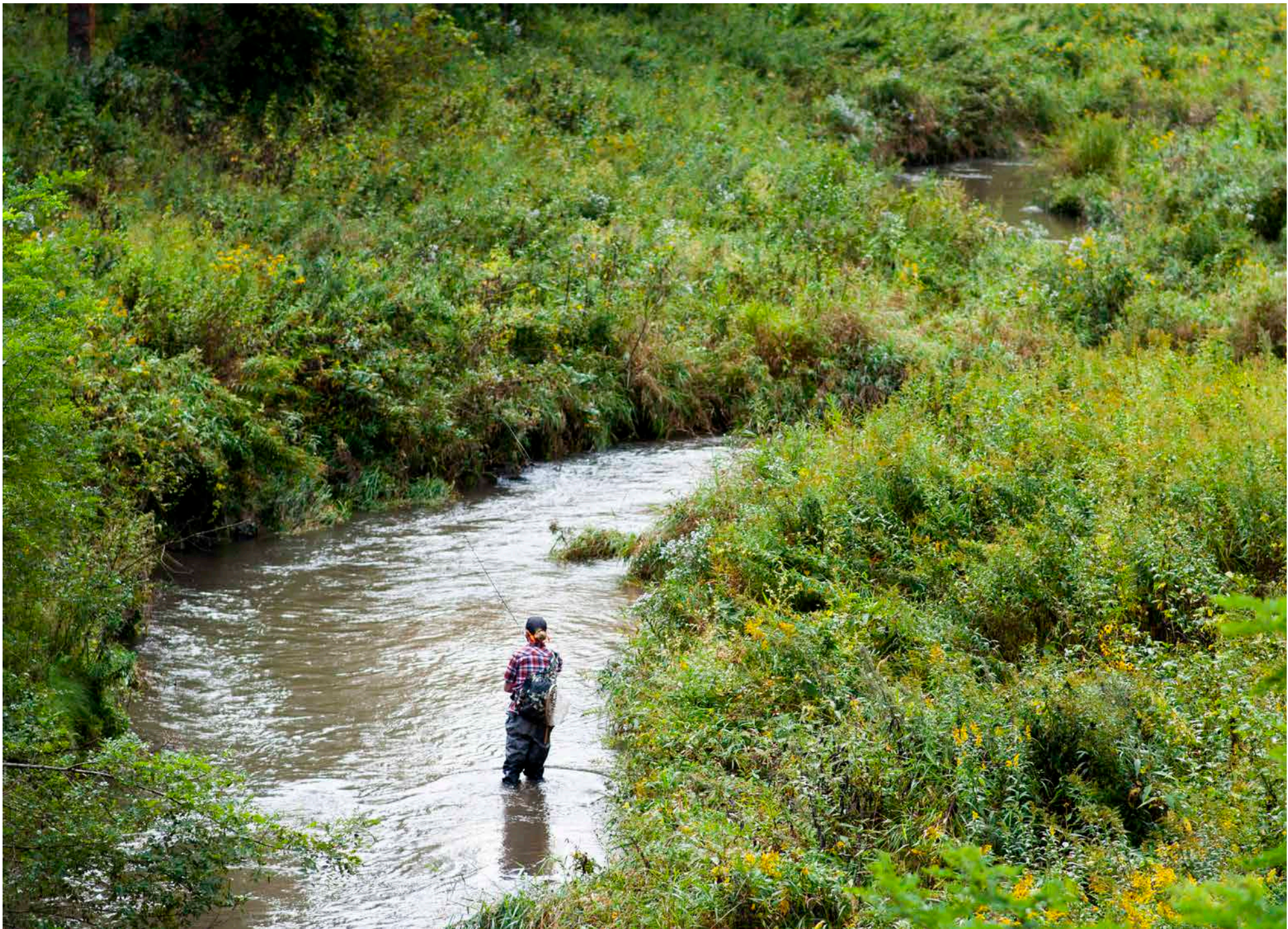
"I give Minnesota Trout Unlimited, a Minnesota non-profit corporation, presently at P.O. Box 845, Chanhassen, MN 55317-0845, EIN# 52-1766036, my (specific personal property item(s) and/or real property located at _____) to be used at the discretion of its governing board."



Gift of Residuary Estate:

"All the rest, residue and remainder of my estate, both real and personal, and wherever situated, I give, devise and bequeath to Minnesota Trout Unlimited, a Minnesota non-profit corporation, presently at P.O. Box 845, Chanhassen, MN 55317-0845, EIN# 52-1766036, to be used at the discretion of its governing board."

The information above is not intended as legal or tax advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney or tax advisor. Contact our executive director, John Lenczewski, with any questions, or for assistance with estate planning, using this language or using this process: jlenczewski@comcast.net or at 612-670-1629.



A STUNNING DAY ON HAY CREEK. MIKE RIEMER PHOTO.

CALL FOR MNTU COMMITTEE MEMBERS

As we work to implement new programs and efforts, there continue to be opportunities for Trout Unlimited members to play a role in helping to guide and create the aspects of the organization that you love.

The following committees help organize and implement some of the key activities of Minnesota TU. We also specifically need involvement in our advocacy work led by our Executive Director, John Lenczewski. If you're inspired to get involved, check out these different options, and get in touch to start the process as we move forward.

Education Committee

The work of the Education Committee focuses on coordinating our Trout in the Classroom, Fishing Skills, Fly Tying and Foster the Outdoors mentorship efforts, as well as other programs to engage all ages of people in our mission. If you're excited about getting kids and adults out on the water fishing and learning about our trout waters around Minnesota, getting involved in this committee might be for you.

Fundraising Committee

The work of the Fundraising Committee spans all of MNTU's fundraising opportunities. Including our Riverkeeper's Council, Annual Appeal, Film Showcase, apparel and more, there are a number of specific components to play a role in, as well as the chance to create new fundraising streams for our organization.

Communications Committee

The work of the Communications Committee centers on the regular operation of our email, website, social media and print media. Broadly, the committee works together to share materials and keep members and the public informed and involved in what's going on with our organization. There are opportunities to help out with photography, newsletter articles, social media management, print media, signage and other components of how MNTU reaches out.

Email with your interest in getting involved or with any questions or ideas at jlenczewski@comcast.net or carl-haensel@hotmail.com. Virtual meetings will be scheduled soon.



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*Welcome to Minnesota's
Trout Capital on the South
Branch of The Root River.*







Photo Credit Brian Schumacher

HABITAT HELPERS NEEDED

We need volunteers to assist with maintenance inspections of completed projects, as well as numerous hands-on tasks on 2021 projects. To volunteer or receive information on opportunities to help with inspections and/or hands-on work, send an email to: monitor@mntu.org. List "inspection" or "habitat help" in the subject line and tell us what type of things or specific streams you might want to help with. Please provide a phone number; we will not use your information for other purposes.

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Foster *the* Outdoors

Connecting Minnesota families to the outdoors
through Fly Fishing with a Volunteer Mentor

May – Mentor-Match-Up

As a volunteer mentor, we pair you up with a local Minnesota youth and a guardian. MNTU provides 2 fly rods for each youth/adult pair to use.

Summer – Go Fishing!

Exchange contact information and coordinate 2-3 outings with your youth/adult pair.

October – Fly Tying

We meet for a fly-tying session with a local fly-tying group.

January – Shop Tour

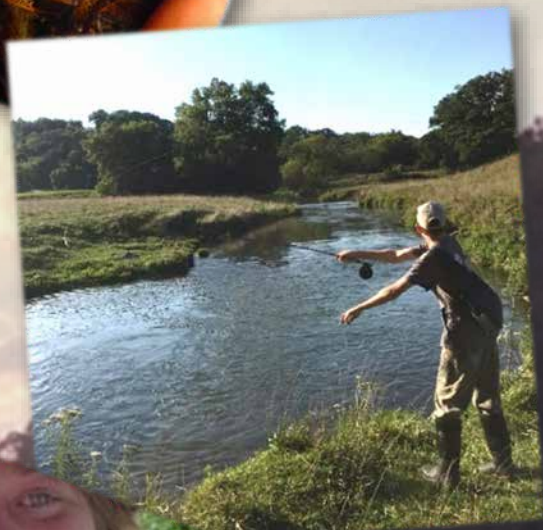
We tour a local fly shop. Review some gear options and ask questions.

March – Great Waters - Fly Fishing Expo

Introduction to the community of fly fishing.

April – End of Season

Final group outing to a trout stream. Formally thank our mentors and look forward to seeing our youth/adult pairs at TU meetings, future Expo's and as future mentors.



Sign up to be a mentor today!

FOSTER THE OUTDOORS MNTU MENTORSHIP PROGRAM UPDATE

WE ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING VOLUNTEER MENTORS FOR THE 2022 PROGRAM YEAR. PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN "EXPERT" BY ANY MEANS. YOU JUST NEED A LITTLE PATIENCE AND THE DESIRE TO SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT FISHING AND THE OUTDOORS WITH A YOUNG PERSON.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT THE PROGRAM COORDINATORS KEVIN WIER 612-867-5768 OR RICH FEMLING 763-807-5878. OR VIA EMAIL AT FOSTERTHEOUTDOORS@HOTMAIL.COM



MNTU CHAPTER NEWS

Gitche Gumee Chapter

Winter held on way too long this year here in the Northland. As I talked to family and friends who lived across the state, winter held on WAY too long for everyone. As the calendar turned to early April, here I was set to hit the rivers in anticipation of finding some steelhead. Little did I know, this would be a year of relentless cold and miserable weather. But like every year, warmer weather returns and it happened to be the end of April before reports arrived of steelhead starting their annual run. I moved back to the area eight years ago and this is one of the latest winters I've experienced. Let's hope, for yours and mine sake, we don't have another winter like that for a few years!

A HUGE thank you to Root River Rod Company for their generous support and donation to Gitche Gumee Trout Unlimited. Rod maker Steve Sobieniak built a beautiful rod for our chapter to auction and help raise funds to further habitat improvements along the North Shore. Thank you to everyone that helped support us and bought a ticket. We are excited to put our funds into several projects later this year.

What is the chapter up to this spring and summer? We are currently working through securing trees and developing plans to offer a few tree planting events this spring. I anticipate our planting events will be held on a Saturday morning or afternoon as well as a week day evening. As we finalize plans, we will be sure to get information out in our chapter email newsletter and on our Facebook page. Later this summer, we will be partnering with the City of Duluth to offer fly casting clinics. We offered these clinics last year and are excited to have the opportunity to provide them again. If you know of anyone interested in learning how to fly fish, have them contact us to participate. Then later in August, we plan to be on Keene Creek in Hermantown to help finish up a habitat improvement project. I'm most excited for this work as I've not spent much time on Keene Creek and it's a project that has great public access with a good brook trout population. I'll be packing gloves and the fly rod.

If you end up on the Kadunce River this year either fishing or on a hiking adventure, keep your eye out for caged trees throughout the lower section of the river. There are newly planted cedar and white pines scattered along the riverside. If you happen to see any damage to them, please send me a note at brandon.kime@gmail.com. The Grand Marais area received significant snowfall this year, which may have damaged some of these caged trees.

Brandon Kime



MANUEL STANS AND HIS DAD, TONY STANS OF ROCHESTER, COOPERATE ON TAKING OUT WILLOWS WITH THE HIAWATHA CHAPTER.

Headwaters Chapter

This spring has been extremely busy so far. We were excited to be back at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo this year. Once again we taught people how to tie their first fly. It was great seeing the familiar faces and being able to put smiles on kids' faces again. We may have had fewer volunteers this year but we were able to keep up with demand.

And speaking of teaching fly tying, our Youth Fly Fishing program was back this year. We did run into one issue, when it came time for registration we received over 70 students. This meant that in order to meet the demand we had to ask more from our volunteers. Instead of running the normal once-a-week class, we had to split the kids into two different groups on Mondays and Thursdays. In this program we teach kids how to tie flies, tie knots, and cast a fly rod. The program culminates with a fishing trip to the Clearwater River.

Our Trout in the Classroom program is doing well. We have five tanks right now and all the fish are healthy. Most of the tanks have completed testing and are ready for release day. We are just waiting on the results of the last tank. John Latimer visited the school for spring phenology week in mid-April. The students toured the Spire Valley Hatchery in late April. Students were able to see where the trout were raised. Release day for the Gene Dillon fish is tentatively set for Thursday, May 19.

Front 20 Outfitters has several upcoming events this spring. There is the 3rd Annual Bluegill Outing & Fly Swap on June 5, CO-ED Fly Fishing schools, Ladies Fly Fishing Workshops, and more. For more information from Front 20 Outfitters, Visit www.front20outfitters.com

Kris Williams

Hiawatha Chapter

With heavy rain in the forecast and hat-flipping wind much of the day, April 23 was a lousy day to hunt, fish or cut willows along Mill Creek northwest of Chatfield.

Still, about two dozen Trout Unlimited members from four chapters assembled along Mill's banks to clean up maybe a half-mile of stream banks—both sides of course—before the threat of heavy storms forced us to quit early.

Before we arrived, Dusty Hoffman, head TU habitat manager in the southeast, and some others pulled out several beaver dams in that stretch. I admit I was skeptical it would help because I fished that area about two weeks before and it was flat water all the way, with a few dams interspersed. Dams removed did, however, make a difference. Where there had been dams were now nice riffles so fishing should improve on the stream.

Walking along the creek to fish those

riffles will be easier because of the work we did.

Here is what Hoffman had to say about why TU holds such service days:

"The conservation value of days like Saturday are that we achieve the goal of removing willow, which should ideally result in the beavers not using that area, instead finding different areas to use and find food resources and dam. Ideally, we do not want beavers in the stream sections where we have done projects, because we have spent a considerable amount of the taxpayers dollars to do the Habitat Improvement project, and beavers tend to have a negative impact on HI project sites. When they dam an area it causes water to back up, and during high water events water will erode the sides of the dam and stream banks first, before topping the dam. Over time, the erosion will get behind the rock toe placed during the project, or behind structures like lunkers that provide overhead cover. When erosion starts behind rock it typically continues downstream, causing failure of stability and often the rocks and structures tip and fall into the channel furthering erosive forces during high-water events.

"There is also a great value in uniting TU chapters on volunteer work days because they share ideas/fishing locations, meet people with similar interests, and accomplish lots of work in a short time. We had non-TU folks there, (as well as) Win-Cres, Hiawatha, Twin Cities and Kiap-TU-Wish members. Bringing together big crowds like that is great for growth and encouraging further involvement...Good energy flows when people achieve together."

Some workers, such as Manuel Stans and his dad, Tony Stans of Rochester, made a natural pair. Manuel said he wanted to help because he likes to fish, beginning with sunfish and now more to trout. Dad did a lot of cutting and his son hauled out cut-down willows.

Linnae Carlson of Vasa, a member of Kiap-TU-Wish, said she got an email about the work day and it wasn't all that far from her home near the Cannon River, so she was there cutting willows. "If we women are going to get out on the streams and fish, then I should help contribute to this kind of project," she said. "If you're going to fish, come and help."

"The work makes fishing easier and safer for anglers, and means fewer lost flies," she said.

Many of us knew others and sometimes joined them, or we just randomly joined others. We would introduce ourselves with a first name then add the more important detail: where we fish and favorite flies. That usually got some good discussions going as we cut willow or hauled it up the bank.

In the end, we cleared some land for fishing and probably thwarted some beaver. When bad weather threatened, we

MNTU CHAPTER NEWS



TREVOR BIEDERMAN ELECTROFISHING AT THE WE ARE WATER PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION.

cut the work short, ate lunch and talked more about trout.

John Weiss

Twin Cities Chapter

After being snowed out in December, the Twin Cities Chapter got another crack at the invasive species on Eagle Creek. On March 26, about 50 volunteers got together to clear an acre of buckthorn and cedar. Temperatures were December-like, in the high 20s, with a blustery north wind, but thankfully no snow. That kind of weather seems like a distant memory in June, but it wasn't so long ago.

Eagle Creek is just one of the streams within a short drive of the Twin Cities. In our April chapter meeting, DNR Trout Stream Habitat Specialist Mark Nemeth presented "Trout in Your Background," an update on trout streams and trout fishing opportunities in the seven-county metro area. Between better land use practices and higher precipitation generating more groundwater flow, there is more trout water now than at any time in the last 50 years. Along

with some well-known streams like the Vermillion River system and Trout Brook in Miesville Ravine, there are new opportunities for habitat improvement in several streams that flow into the St. Croix and Minnesota rivers.

Our Streamkeepers are active again this season, and have added Belle Creek and the Little Cannon to the list of streams they regularly visit to measure water temperature and chemistry, and to note disturbances and habitat improvement opportunities. They also do some reporting on the fishing. You can find their regular updates on the TCTU Blog: www.twincitiestu.org/blog

The focus for our chapter members this summer is going to be...fishing! Not only fishing ourselves, but volunteering to teach kids and families to fish. We have over 30 fishing skills programs lined up between June and August in metro area parks, including both spin and fly fishing, for warm and coldwater species. You can find them all on the TU Events Center. (<https://tu.myeventscenter.com/>) Please volunteer!

Bob Luck

Win-Cres Chapter

There has been a flurry of activity this spring. Highlights include:

A morning with the Goodhue Fishing Club. This vibrant club is composed of over 70 middle and high school students from the Goodhue public schools, nearly half of them female. Win-Cres members taught casting (both spinning and fly), fly tying, and a new topic, reading the water. Our goal was to set the students up for success on our next outing.

A morning of guided fishing in the Rushford area. Despite a rain-shortened outing, 36 students caught 72 trout. A group of girls asked their driver to stop on the way home so they could fish another stream. We are grateful to members of Hiawatha for helping as guides.

A Saturday outing with the Scouts. Although they retain their official name of Boy Scouts of America, the organization has changed with the times. There were many female scouts and adult leaders. Win-Cres was approached about teaching fly fishing to 46 scouts camped out at Forestville State Park, possibly leading to a Fly Fishing Merit Badge for some. We gave an overview of fly fishing and

offered casting instruction and fly tying. After lunch, there were two demonstrations of stream fishing and reading the water. We plan to offer a hands-on opportunity to fly fish for sunfish in later May. One of our board members is working toward certification as a counselor for the Fly Fishing Merit Badge. I am grateful to several people from outside the chapter who helped: Vaughn Snook, Lanesboro Fisheries and a certified fly casting instructor, Carl Berberich from Hiawatha who helped with casting, Rev. John Carrier and Pat Fryer from Winona who helped with fly tying.

A public demonstration of habitat work on Garvin Brook, as part of the regional "We Are Water" initiative going on throughout the state. The event included electrofishing of an improved area. I continue to be surprised when 12 trout come out of a bank with sky hooks. Another surprise was the number of sculpins, a marker for high water quality.

Brushing on Cedar Valley Creek. In March a group of 10 cut down shrubs and small trees in the stream corridor immediately above an area planned for HI work, including taking out a number of the invasive black locust trees.

Brushing on Little Pickwick, helping to clean up storm damage in an area that had major removal of trees and shrubs a year ago.

Going forward, there will be plenty of activity this summer. We are removing old tires from some area streams. Dave Schaffer envisions an expanded mowing program this summer, creating access along several miles of stream. There will be luncheon structures to build for projects on West Beaver and Winnebago. We expect to participate in Whitewater State Park's Fly Fishing Retreat for Military Families in September. We will continue our efforts to suppress Japanese knotweed on Garvin.

Working with local scout leaders, I see many areas of common interest with Trout Unlimited. The Scouts are committed to the healthy development of young people. TU shares that interest, but with a special emphasis on building connections with the outdoors and coldwater fisheries. The Fly Fishing Merit Badge is one place where our interests intersect. Anyone considering becoming a counselor should look at the Boy Scouts of America website. The organization is also committed to protecting their young people from predators. Before doing anything else, volunteers must watch a 72 minute program on youth protection. A background check is part of the process, along with stating your qualifications.

Chuck Shepard



WIN-CRES HELD A SUCCESSFUL EVENT WITH THE ROBUST GOODHUE FISHING CLUB.

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All members also receive this publication, as well as TROUT, TU's national magazine. Other benefits include a 16-month TU calendar, car rental & hotel discounts and more. TU offers a variety of membership categories.

Visit www.tu.org today to sign up.

OR SUBSCRIBE!

For those of you who are members of chapters in other states, or who would like to directly support MNTU's newsletter, we welcome subscribers who would like to receive and support the newsletter. Sign up to get three colorful issues annually. Sign up online at mntu.org or mail in this form to receive the next issue arriving in November!

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Minnesota TU is the leading voice, your voice, advocating for coldwater fisheries and watersheds in Minnesota and the region. Our effective advocacy work, and the work necessary to obtain grants to fund our stream restoration and environmental education programs, **cannot continue without your direct financial support of Minnesota TU.** We receive none of the donations raised from TU's direct mail and other fundraising efforts, and the small portion of your membership dues we receive is less than the cost to print and mail this newsletter. We need direct support from you - members and non-members alike - to keep us working effectively for you, your family and your friends. Every dollar of your donation will be used here in Minnesota.

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SELECT POETRY

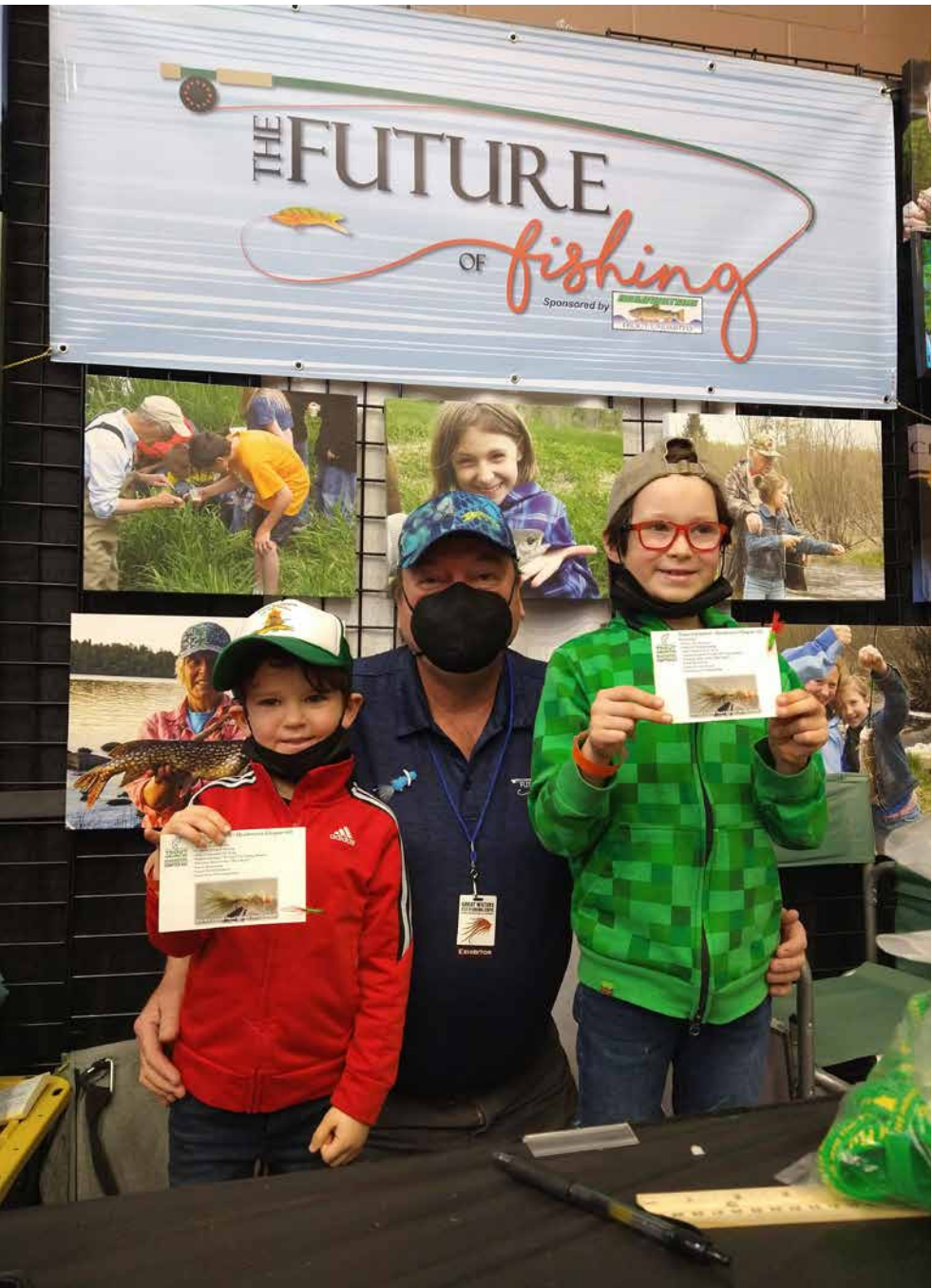
By Larry Gavin

Headwaters

Light a candle and sharpen a pencil
hidden here between sandstone
and foliage; a side chapel.
Waters flow, barely visible, like a secret.
Don't tell. Don't struggle with little
things like meaning, don't struggle
at all. Instead, build with this slope
both mystery and expectation. Growing
incrementally like a vision of moving
water and the tumbling voice of crystal
laughing in sunlight and shadow. The long
journey to an ocean. Slowly, slowly.

Headwaters, another reason to love
this world and to remove the small
voice that hints at doubt. Those fish
come a bit later, the insects later too.
Celebrate the clumsy beginning created
almost by accident, like gratitude,
and the realization the world is made
of many bodies.

Larry Gavin is a poet from Faribault, Minnesota. He is the author of five books of poetry. His newest, A Fragile Shelter: New and Selected Poems, is available from Red Dragonfly Press. www.reddragonflypress.org



JOHN LUETH, HEADWATERS CHAPTER MEMBER, WITH TWO HAPPY FLY TYERS AT THE GREAT WATERS FLY FISHING EXPO.