

# TROUT UNLIMITED MINNESOTA

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- STANLEY LEONARD ARTIST PROFILE
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- ICE OUT BLUES
- TYING THE 20 INCHER STONEFLY
- ELECTROSHOCKING WITH THE MNDNR

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EDITOR’S ANGLE  
 DRIFTLESS HABITAT WORK SHINES

By Jade Thomason, Editor

This year's emergence from the winter cocoon was slow and sputtering. Record snowfall in Duluth had us pleading for help from Iowans this April and the steelhead laughing at us from the comparatively balmy waters of Lake Superior. I calculated at home we received twice as much snow as a typical winter. Any time the meteorologist predicted snow as “localized accumulation greater at higher elevations” that was my house. Every time.

My family and I were able to make two short escapes to the Driftless this spring and explored miles of MN Trout Unlimited habitat-improved rivers. Size 18 flies and spooky fish were a little different than the one-ounce bucktail jig with an entire smelt attached that I was most recently fishing (April is lake trout time). Near Lanesboro, well-managed pastures and gently sweeping stream curves made for a fly fishing playground. Ac-

cess was easy with maintained stiles and the cow residents friendly. Our paths crossed with one landowner who told us that post-project he had "never seen so many trout" in his life, and expressed his amazement that floods had been less severe. Next time you’re out on an improved stream, take a look around and imagine the moving parts that brought the stream to its current point: landowners, advocacy, design, heavy-machinery, and volunteers.

If the Driftless is on your mind, let me suggest subscribing to Carl Berberich’s e-newsletter, the TU Western Driftless Hotline. A monthly product, the newsletter includes hot flies, local stories, MNTU and Iowa Driftless chapter updates, as well as an up-to-date fishing report. Carl has filled an important niche of regular communication and we thank him for the effort. To subscribe, email him at [cberberic@gmail.com](mailto:cberberic@gmail.com)



READ BEN NELSON'S PROFILE OF LOCAL ARTIST STANLEY LEONARD ON PAGE 6.

ON THE COVER

The habitat-improved section of Pine Creek, tributary to Rush Creek in Winona County, is a joy to fish and experience. Jade Thomason photo.

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FIFTH GRADE TIC STUDENTS FROM BEMIDJI CELEBRATE THEIR TROUT RELEASE ALONG THE CLEARWATER RIVER.



# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE "PALEOZOIC PLATEAU"?

By John Lenczewski, MNTU Executive Director

Perhaps you have heard about this new Midwest trout fishing Shangri-La called the Paleozoic Plateau? Minnesota has some great trout streams, but I have heard that the spring-fed gems of the Paleozoic Plateau are incredibly productive. It seems the MNDNR has known about this special area for years. Have they been keeping secrets from us? Just where is this place and why have I been hearing about it lately?

It turns out that the Paleozoic Plateau is another name for the karst region of southeast Minnesota that trout anglers know as the Driftless Area. When the MNDNR mapped the boundaries of the unique ecological regions of the state they settled on this name. Not very catchy. So why was it used in the newly enacted law requiring the MPCA and the

state departments of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources to recommend changes to laws and rules governing land use practices, such as manure and pesticide application rules? State law prevents the legislature from passing a law that singles out just a few counties by name, unless each affected county consents. However, targeting and tailoring a law to a unique ecological region does not run into this hurdle, precisely because it addresses a unique natural feature rather than a local government boundary. Since the distinct boundaries of the Paleozoic Plateau have been mapped, the law can be targeted without singling out local governments.

This solution was suggested to legislators by MNTU, as it also was when helping craft the silica sand mining setback



nearly a decade ago. In short, while "Paleozoic Plateau" may not roll off the tongue, the fact that you are hearing about it now is a good thing. It indicates that southeast Minnesota trout streams are getting special protections.



## MINNESOTA COUNCIL UPDATE

### PROGRESS ON OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

By Brent Notbohm, Minnesota Council of TU Chair

There must be something in the air (besides smoke from Canada) because my gosh has it been a busy spring! I want to start by thanking our Executive Director John Lenczewski for all his outstanding work lobbying on behalf of MNTU. By the time you read this, Governor Walz will have signed into law a host of items that will make better MNTU's conservation of coldwater efforts. John has been a tireless advocate this legislative session, working the phones and emails, to ensure MNTU is recognized and heard as a leading voice in the conservation movement of Minnesota. THANK YOU JOHN! And thanks to all of those who wrote emails and made calls this legislative session on behalf of MNTU and our shared mission. Your dedication to our cause is important and truly makes a difference!

More good news! I am very happy to announce the successful hiring of a new Habitat Program Director. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Jennifer Biederman to MNTU! Under Jen's direction, MNTU will continue to lead the nation in state funded habitat work. I want to thank John Hunt and Tony Nelson who, along with John and myself, served on the committee that led to Jen's success-

ful hire. Read more about Jen on Page 5. The hiring of Jen as Habitat Director, along with Executive Assistant Scott Criqui last year, means we are making excellent progress with the strategic plan initiatives to hire and maintain a professional staff. Next up, we will be searching for an Assistant Director, who we hope to hire by September. For this expansion of staff, I spent a good portion of my MNTU time this winter and spring developing personnel policies for our organization. Though not as exciting as habitat work or environmental advocacy, it's important that we create both the infrastructure and the culture of a successful organization. These policies were passed by the Minnesota Council's Board of Directors at our April meeting.

Even though we are professionalizing some of our operations, I want to reiterate that MNTU is primarily a volunteer organization that values every member. The need for more staff arose as MNTU expanded beyond its capacity in the decade after hiring John as Executive Director. With the filling of these new positions, we will be able to bring John's unsustainable workload into proportion and position MNTU for future stability and success. Since I'm mentioning staff,



I also want to recognize all the fantastic work of our Education Program Supervisor Amber Taylor, and Development Director Mark Abner. MNTU is so fortunate to have such a terrific team of talented and passionate people!

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any ideas or thoughts you would like to share about MNTU, our mission, or the strategic plan we are working on. Just don't be surprised if we end up talking about fishing. As exciting as all the work of MNTU is, I personally hope things slow down a little so that I can enjoy more fishing time in our great state this summer! Maybe I'll bump into some of you out there. I hope so!



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# MNTU LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## FISH KILL PREVENTION, HABITAT FUNDING AND MORE

By John Lenczewski, MNTU Executive Director



WISEL CREEK BEFORE AND AFTER MNTU HABITAT WORK. NEW FUNDING WILL ENABLE MORE PROJECTS LIKE THIS IN SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA.

On May 22nd the Minnesota Legislature wrapped up an annual session that was very good for trout and trout anglers. In addition to passing bills with appropriations that will enable Minnesota Trout Unlimited (MNTU) to complete more habitat restoration and expand its environmental education program in schools, the legislature also passed a host of good environment and climate policy provisions and funded natural resources work by state agencies. More on these provisions later in this article.

First, however, it is worth examining one of these new laws, the provision regarding fish kills, to appreciate how legislative action can take several years and require persistent leadership and advocacy from the conservation and environmental community.

### Preventing Fish Kills: The Importance of Legislative Action

In July 2022 a major fish kill occurred on Rush Creek near Lewiston, MN. This was the fourth major fish kill within a 15-mile radius in the past seven years: the South Branch of the Whitewater River in 2015, Garvin Brook in 2019, Trout Valley Creek in 2021, and Rush Creek in 2022. The investigation of the fish kill on the South Branch of the Whitewater River was long on staff hours and report pages (367), but short on meaningful conclusions or calls for change.

### 2016 Bill Introduction Spurs Protocol Development

The outrage expressed by MNTU and others concerning the agencies' rather slow and limited response to the South Branch fish kill led Representative Rick Hansen to introduce a bill in March 2016 that would have required several state agencies to develop a protocol for responding to notification of a fish kill. That bill did not become law, but it did spur the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR)

to develop a response protocol that incorporated many of the provisions in the bill. The guidance document calls for coordination with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). You can read this 2017 guidance document, "Investigation of Fish Kills in Minnesota Waters," on the MNDNR website using this link: [https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/fisheries/special\\_reports/182.pdf](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/fisheries/special_reports/182.pdf)

This new protocol was put to the test in September 2019 when another major fish kill occurred on Garvin Brook, located a few miles east of Lewiston, MN. Under the protocol, the MNDNR serves as the lead agency on fish kill investigations until a discharge or release has been identified as the cause, rather than a natural cause; the MDA takes the lead for pesticide and fertilizer incidents; and the MPCA investigates the impacts from pollutants such as manure and releases of hazardous materials. This mul-

tiagency approach resulted in a "cone of silence" that quickly descended on the Garvin Brook investigation and led to a five-month wait until a short report was released in February 2020. That report and subsequent fish kills underscore the inadequacy of these agencies' response to the increasingly frequent poisoning of southeast MN trout streams.

The Garvin Brook report, entitled "Response to 2019 fish kill on Garvin Brook, Winona County," is found on the MPCA website at: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/tldr-g1-22.pdf> The report revealed:

- Contaminants that washed off agricultural land by rainfall events are the likely cause of the fish kill.
- Pinpointing the exact source of pollutants with 100% certainty is very difficult, due to the dilutive effect of flowing water flushing the pollutants downstream before dead fish are discovered.

- The agencies are aware of how the karst setting accelerates polluted runoff into springs and streams.
- The agencies fail to acknowledge the ongoing risk posed by applications of manure and pesticides given the karst topography and regular rainfall patterns.
- There is no discussion of the need to reexamine application rules or apply risk management principles moving forward.
- The existing protocol needs improvement.

### Lessons Not Learned by the Agencies

The ironically captioned "lessons learned" section of the report illustrates how the agencies missed the lessons they should have learned. After pointing out the "clear interaction between surface water and groundwater" in the area and the risk of drinking water well contamination, the agencies then miss the lesson they should have learned: The



KARST TOPOGRAPHY IN THE DRIFTLESS AREA PRESENTS A HIGHER RISK FOR FISH KILLS WITHOUT PREVENTATIVE LEGISLATION.



current rules and practices around the application of manure and pesticides are not working to keep these pollutants out of surface and groundwater. The report encourages individuals to test their wells so they know about the contamination, but fails to examine measures to prevent contamination. And there is no mention of the need to apply risk management principles to these land practices, despite a pattern of increasing fish kills.

**Rush Creek Fish Kill and Legislative Response**

The July 2022 fish kill on Rush Creek made clear that the agencies’ responses to fish kills and the land practices that lead to fish kills are inadequate. At the start of the 2023 legislative session, Representatives Sydney Jordan, Rick Hansen, and others in the House, and Senators Jennifer McEwen and Scott Dibble in the Senate introduced bills requiring the MPCA, MDA, MNDNR, and Health Department to develop a more comprehensive response protocol. The bill was largely identical to Representative Hansen’s bill introduced in March 2016. This legislative response was a result of the public outcry by Minnesota Trout Unlimited and many partners and the leadership by these legislators. Work by MNTU and partners, including the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy and the Land Stewardship Project, improved the bills, and letters and calls by MNTU members ensured that these provisions became law. The fish kill reporting and protocol development provisions are in Minnesota Laws, Chapter 60, in Article 4, Sections 82 to 84. Here is the link to the new law: [www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2023/0/Session+Law/Chapter/60/](http://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2023/0/Session+Law/Chapter/60/)

**Requiring Action to Prevent Fish Kills**  
Statewide fish kill reporting requirements and good agency response protocol are important. However, in south-

east Minnesota where all the major fish kills have occurred, the agencies (MDA, MNDNR, and MPCA) already know enough to identify laws, rules, and regulatory procedures that should be changed to prevent further fish kills in this uniquely sensitive landscape. MNTU helped craft a separate provision requiring that state agencies recommend changes to statutes and rules, especially regarding manure spreading and pesticide application practices, to prevent fish kills in southeast MN. We had to first convince our partners that this was essential, then press legislators to keep this provision in the final bill.

**Thanks to the letters, emails, and phone calls from MNTU members, the bill and the provision requiring state agency action specifically aimed at preventing fish kills in southeast MN, crossed the finish line!** This requirement, found in Section 101 of Article 4, Minnesota Laws, Chapter 60, states:

Sec. 101. STATUTORY AND RULE REVISIONS TO PREVENT FISH KILLS IN DRIFTLESS AREA.

By January 15, 2024, the commissioners of agriculture, health, and natural resources and the commissioner of the Pollution Control Agency must make recommendations to the legislature for statutes and rules that should be amended to prevent fish kills within the boundaries of the Department of Natural Resources Paleozoic Plateau ecological section.

**Habitat Funding**

In other legislative activity, the Omnibus Legacy Bill containing appropriations from the Outdoor Heritage Fund was signed by Governor Walz on May 19. The law includes an appropriation of \$1,690,000 for MNTU to undertake additional habitat work on Eagle Creek, the



APPROPRIATION FROM THE ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND WILL ALLOW MNTU TO OPERATE AND EXPAND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR THE NEXT TWO SCHOOL YEARS.

Little Cannon River, the South Branch Root River in Lanesboro, and other streams. Work on the ground will occur primarily in 2024 and 2025. The final bill is at this link: [www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2023/0/Session+Law/Chapter/40/](http://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2023/0/Session+Law/Chapter/40/)

**Environmental Education Funding**

In addition to the fish kill provisions summarized above, the Environment, Natural Resources, Climate, and Energy Finance and Policy Omnibus Bill, signed into law as Minnesota Laws, Chapter 60, included an appropriation from the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund for MNTU to operate and expand its environmental education program for the next two school years. The appropriation for this reimbursement-based grant is found in Subdivision 5(g), Sec-

tion 2, Article 2, of Minnesota Laws, Chapter 60.

**Environment and Climate Policy**

Minnesota Laws, Chapter 60, also includes a host of good environment and climate policy provisions and funding for agency natural resources work. These provisions and funding are the culmination of several years of work by MNTU, its many environmental partners, and environmental leaders in the House and Senate. We’ll summarize those in a future edition of this newsletter.

Thank you to all who sent emails, made calls and otherwise reached out to your legislators. You have made a significant difference for Minnesota’s trout streams!

**INTRO TO JENNIFER BIEDERMAN**  
**MNTU WELCOMES STATEWIDE HABITAT PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

Jennifer (Cochran) Biederman joins Minnesota Trout Unlimited in May 2023 as the Habitat Program Director. For the past 20 years, the Driftless Ecoregion has been the backdrop for much of her education and work, starting with earning her BA in Environmental Biology from Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota. She briefly studied Neotropical freshwater fish in Central America for her Master’s degree in Ecology and Evolution from Texas A&M University, but made her way back to the Driftless to study the seasonal ecology of brown trout for her PhD at the University of Minnesota, where she worked closely with Dr. Bruce Vondracek and Dr. Len Ferrington. During this time, she also taught in the Biology Department at Winona State University, where she worked with students on trout stream research and collaborated with colleagues, including Dr. Neal Mundahl, on trout stream projects. In 2020, she joined the Biology Department at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota, where she was able to focus her teaching and scholarship on the study of coldwater streams

and spent a lot of time with students in Gilmore Creek.

Beyond teaching, Jennifer has engaged with several agencies and non-profit groups to advance the conservation, management, and appreciation of freshwater ecosystems, including as a member of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ Recruitment, Retention, & Reactivation (R3) Council Task Force (2018-2020) and as a certified trainer for the Save Our Streams Citizen Science water quality monitoring program through the Izaak Walton League. Most recently, she serves as an advisor for the Bugs Below Zero project with the University of Minnesota\*. She enjoys engagement and outreach with diverse stakeholders, and finds that it breathes energy and life into the important work of advancing the conservation of freshwater ecosystems.

Jennifer lives with her family on Garvin Brook in Stockton, Minnesota, where her three kids are frequently found in and around the stream. She enjoys fly



fishing, but is often distracted by the aquatic macroinvertebrates and wildflowers as her husband moves ahead and lands most of the fish. She is excited to be on board with Minnesota Trout Unlimited and looks forward to helping expand the restoration and enhancement of

trout streams across the state.

\*The Bugs Below Zero project is a great opportunity for winter anglers to engage with a new, important area of research - reach out to Jennifer for more information



# STANLEY LEONARD

## ARTIST PROFILE

By Ben Nelson

Stanley Leonard is a woodcut printmaker. “A xylographist,” he says. “But very few people know that term. If somebody uses that term I think-” then he looks to the side, lowers his voice, and from the side of his mouth says, “That guy’s a snob.”

Leonard is 34 years old. He’s bearded. He wears a ball cap that reads ‘Land of 10,000 Loons.’ Pastel fish pattern his shirt. Today he is in his art studio in the basement of his home. It’s a little cluttered. It’s carpeted but you can keep your shoes on in there. Book shelves, antlers, and artwork hang from the walls. Tools are clamped to the ceiling. In one corner of the room, pale green ink is rolled out on a glass tabletop. Cat-sized paw prints track through the ink. “That’s oil-based ink,” Stanley says. “It doesn’t dry until absorbed in paper fiber. It’s not the first time that’s happened.”

Next to the glass-top table is a manual etching press. “The press means a great deal to me,” Stanley says. “My late friend Tony built this press using plans from, if I remember correctly, buildapress.com. It is made of steel and aluminum plates, with rollers milled from solid aluminum blocks. Tony was a great friend I met while we both studied art in college. He’s been gone for several years now, but when I print using the press he built it’s like we are back in the studio together.”

Adjacent to the press, a wooden board rests on a drafting desk. A line of conifers is drawn across it and the space between the boughs is carved away. U gouges and V gouges stand in a clever little LEGO gouge rack. “These LEGOs have been passed down a couple generations,” Stanley says. He calls them new heirlooms.

Leonard pushes the plunger of a French press and pours a cup of coffee. He sits on a couch which is opposite the basement stairs and a flat screen television. Beneath the TV is a Super Nintendo, its cords and controllers. Star Fox is loaded in the console. Stanley sips his coffee, “I like to hold onto youth.”

Stanley has been making art since his youth. “I’d have one thumb on a crayon and the other in my mouth.” When Stanley unearthed his childhood time capsule he found, inside of it, a career aspiration statement. His younger self had written ‘I am going to be an artist’. Stanley smiles, shrugs, and says, “Dang Kid! We did it!”

“My parents let me go to college for art,” says Leonard. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Stout. “I visited Stout and was like, ‘Wow.’ I was impressed by the art their students turned out. I wanted to learn to do that.” Stout was also a good distance from home, four hours away. “Far enough that my mom wouldn’t visit me every weekend.”

“I wanted to be a ceramist. It’s a fairly technical, skill-based process as well as an art. Skills you need to learn. Earn. You can’t



**FISH ARE AMONG STANLEY LEONARD'S FAVORITE SUBJECTS. HE PREFERS TO WORK WITH WOOD RATHER THAN SYNTHETIC MATERIALS AND DRAWS HIS IMAGES DIRECTLY ONTO THE WOODBLOCK.**

come to it from pure, natural talent. Print making is the same way. It has a hand in craft, a hand in art. It’s process-oriented. Step one is a precursor. You need to follow the order. I’m terribly impulsive when it comes to creativity. I’m a terrible painter.” Stanley pantomimes frenzied brush strokes and disregard for any form of order. “I need structure to rein me in. Print making, I need the entire thing planned out before I start.”

Leonard earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in studio art with an emphasis in printmaking. “In retrospect the program maybe tried to put me, a ‘square peg,’ into a ‘round hole’. The academic world of art tries to teach you how to change

the world or how it’s perceived. This also tended to push many studio majors into being a little highbrow themselves. There is a place for the concepts of highbrow art,” Leonard says. “But I do think that many artists’ intentions either stray or miss the mark on execution. I can tell you that I have read some amazingly complex and beautiful ideas written out as an artist’s statement for a corresponding piece of sculpture that in no way, shape, or form logically represents visually the concept that they had parlayed. When that happens I usually think in my head, ‘Huh, they should have been a writer.’”

“While studying for my BFA I think I

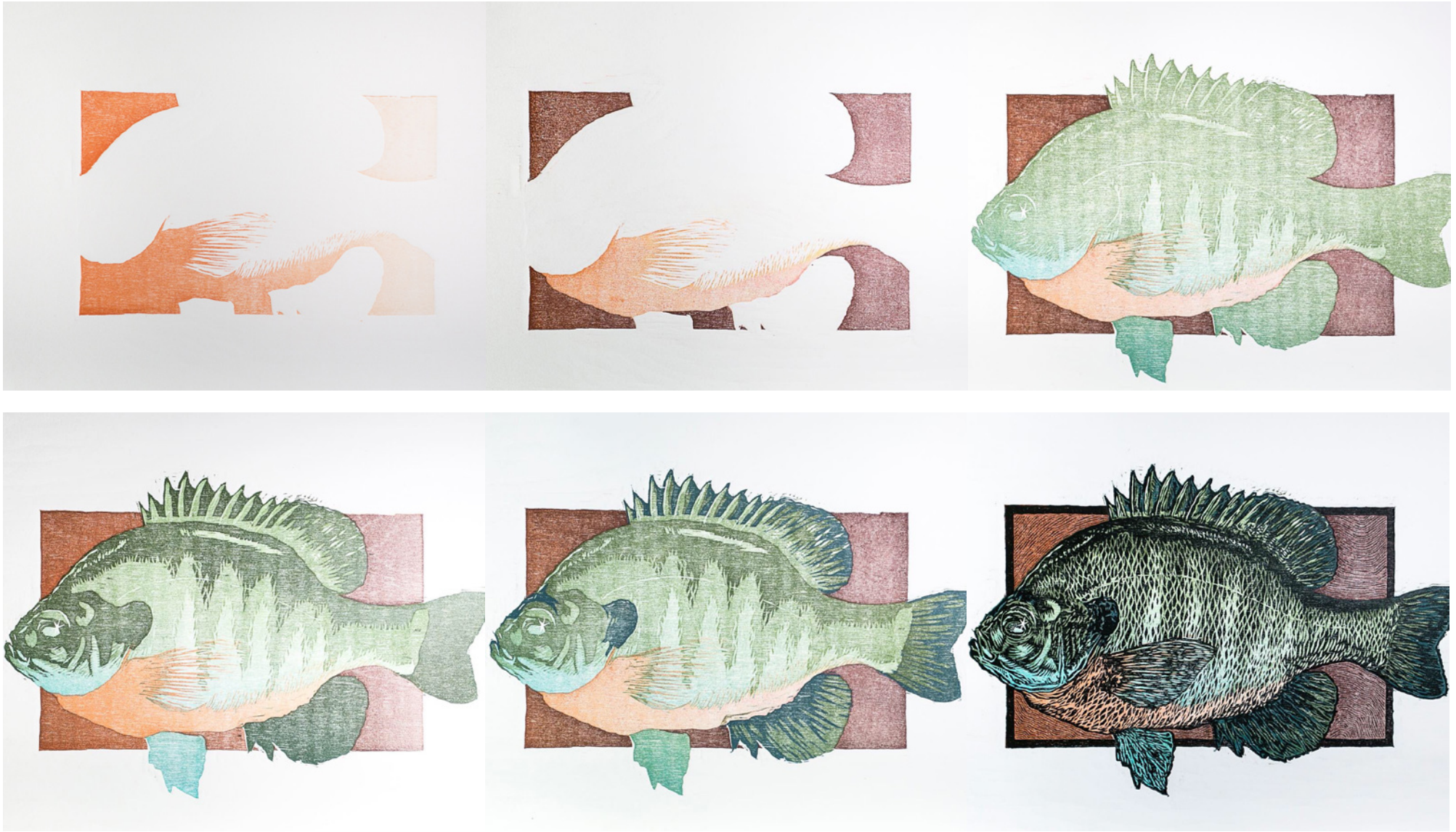
and my peers would have looked down upon the lack of heavy conceptual ideas in my work. We would have called it hotel art. I found that in my work I like to look closer at the natural world that is and was. Nature did it best. I’m just trying to capture some of that magic. In doing so I hope that I can inspire some of the same love of nature and our connection to wild animals and wild places.”

Fish are among Leonard’s favorite subjects. “First, it comes from my love of fishing. Honestly, it is one of my favorite outdoor activities. Second, it’s just fun! They look cool, and it’s super fun to carve all the texture of the scales, the fins, and all the great colors and patterns.



**“JAMES BROWN” 14” x 30”, SEVEN COLOR, FOUR BLOCK, WOODBLOCK PRINT.**





**ALL OF LEONARD'S PRINTS ARE 100% ORIGINAL, PULLED DIRECTLY FROM A HAND-CARVED AND INKED WOODBLOCK. A FINISHED PIECE HAS MANY LAYERS OF COLOR AND REQUIRES MULTIPLE PRESSINGS.**

Lastly, fish are definitely under-appreciated in the clash of our collective human love of charismatic megafauna.”

“Everything I do, it’s all relief carving. I’m carving big stamps out of wood.” Leonard uses a technique called multiple block reduction. He carves a series of complimentary woodblocks that together, after being inked with their own colors and pressed into the paper in perfectly aligned layers create the final image. “It’s been around thousands of years. It’s used on every continent. It is the simplest way to make a reproducible image.”

Rather than linoleum, or other synthetic block materials, Leonard prefers to work with wood. “I love wood,” he says. “I think it’s one of the most beautiful and versatile materials on earth. Wood was

a living thing, the grain moves left and right, up and down. And it wants to drag your tool this way and that, pulling, tearing, chipping. All of those imperfections add so much character to the mark making. I couldn’t make it look that way on my own. So really the wood is a contributing artist to what I do.”

Leonard draws his image directly on the woodblock. He paints red-tinted finish shellac over the drawing. This will provide contrast against what is carved away and also prevents the pencil marks from smearing during the carving stage.

“One of the things that sets me apart from some of my contemporaries is the level of detail I will carve in. Most woodblock relief printing you will see uses much bolder mark-making, which I absolutely love the aesthetic of. I’ve

tried to push myself into working in the style of many of my role models, but most of the times I ended up three inches from my block carving tiny little lines for hours.”

Stanley rolls Akua Intaglio Ink on a glass tabletop, then onto a brayer, and from the brayer to the block. “Getting the right amount of ink on the brayer takes the most time to get good at. It’s hard to teach. The ink has a certain sound, a tackiness. I’m looking for a texture that reminds you of an orange peel. It’s hard to know until you’ve done it.”

A three point Japanese Kento registration system holds the paper in precise alignment over the inked blocks throughout the sequence of pressings. Each layer of color for every print is rolled independently and goes through the press on its own pass. A single finished piece will receive as many as six layers of color. Multiply the number of pressings for each finished print by the number of prints in the edition and the result reflects the time and repetition required for printmaking. “The process can be pretty long and mundane,” Stanley says. “This is working man’s art.”

Leonard also frames his work himself. Early on in his career, Stanley was excited to have a print accepted to the Minnesota State Fair Fine Arts Show. “The work needed to be framed,” he recalls. “I went to Michael’s. This frame is going to cost me more than I charge for the piece!” Stanley now has a wood shop in the backyard shed. He uses repurposed materials: solid oak with inlaid walnut mitre splines. His current frames are former church pews. “My frames compliment the piece without being too distracting. They keep it simple.”

Leonard sells his art online as well as at art fairs around the Midwest. “I’m a traveling merchant. This isn’t part of the highbrow gallery art world. It’s an old-school way of selling wares,” he

says. Stanley does as many as 15 shows between May and September. He’ll travel to Duluth, Minnesota, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Columbus, Ohio. “It’s a hectic summer. You’re selling your art and selling yourself.” Despite the exhaustion, Stanley has a lot of fun on the art fair circuit. The artists play art fair bingo. Squares can be daubed for spotting someone walking an iguana, or pushing a dog in a stroller. “I have my road friends. We share a vocabulary.” Be-Backers are uncomfortable telling the artist that they aren’t going to buy something so they say ‘I’ll be back’. Tire Kickers are fair-goers who spend time looking at every piece, talk to the artist about every single aspect of their art, and then leave.

One tire-kicking question is, ‘How would you describe your style of art?’ And to that, Stanley responds, “I’d describe it as the hard way!” Then he laughs and explains. “What I mean by that is I am using some of the oldest techniques of making a reproducible image. It’s something that an inkjet printer does today but I am painstakingly carving woodblocks and layering color on top of color, hand cranking paper through a mechanical press to create an image. It’s funny and beautiful and rich with history.”

To see more of Stanley’s art, visit his website: [www.stanleyleonardstudio.com](http://www.stanleyleonardstudio.com), or follow him on Instagram @stanley\_leonard\_studio. Or better yet, throw your dog in the stroller, walk through an art fair, and look for Stanley’s tent. Look for LEGOs on the counter and trout on the walls. Watch Stanley wield a gouge. Ask some questions. Kick some tires. And bring home something that is both ancient and original.

*Editor’s Note: Ben Nelson is a physician in Duluth. He lives there with his wife and three children.*



**LEONARD AND HIS FAMILY ARE ON THE ART FAIR CIRCUIT AND CAN SHOW AT AS MANY AS 15 DIFFERENT EVENTS IN A SEASON.**



# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS

Minnesota Trout Unlimited appreciates each of its 215 generous donors who gave during our last fiscal year, which ran April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023. Your support, regardless of the amount, makes MNTU's habitat improvement, policy advocacy and education programming possible.

**We enjoy hearing from our supporters, including the following who contacted us in the last year. Thanks for your encouragement!**

"Keep up the good work! You guys are the greatest!"  
Gary Grabko, St. Paul

"I hope the MNTU publication can continue. It is such a valuable source of information."  
Jim Crozier, Brainerd

"I have been impressed with so much about TU, including the classes, outings, and events serving veterans, cancer survivors, and urban kids."  
Keith TerHaar, Lino Lakes

"Love all the great stream restoration work that TU is doing. Fished on Winnebago Creek and was very impressed! Great job on the Trout in the Classroom projects, also! Keep it up."  
Jim Nielsen, Rochester

"The newspaper is GREAT! Thanks!"  
Mark Egan, Minneapolis

"I love MNTU!!...Looking forward to volunteering more in the future!!"  
Daniel and Tara Owens, Bloomington

Thank you to all donors, regardless of amount! We strive for accuracy and we welcome your corrections to [mark.abner@mntu.org](mailto:mark.abner@mntu.org).

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# FLY TYING

## THE 20 INCHER STONEFLY NYMPH

By Paul Johnson



A few weeks ago several of us were visiting at one of our Wednesday night gatherings of Laughing Trout. Someone asked me if I fish stoneflies much in the Driftless.

My answer was "No." However, I did not have an answer as to why not.

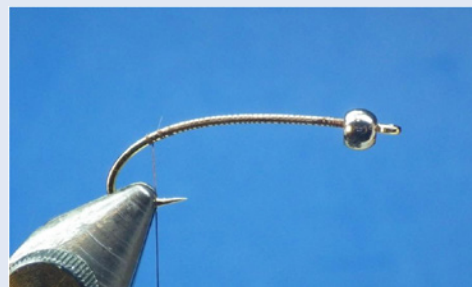
On any given day my sling pack must have over 1,000 flies, in that includes several dozen 20 Incher Stonefly Nymphs. For some reason they just seem to stay on the bottom of my pack.

The 20 Incher is my favorite stonefly nymph. This pattern has such a good profile and at the same time maintains that ugly look that makes fish want to eat it.

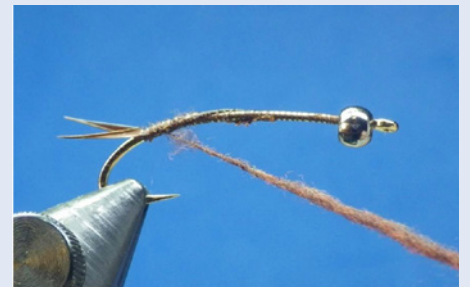
My goal is to fish this fly more this season. You should tie some up for yourself and give them a try and let me know how you did.

### Materials List

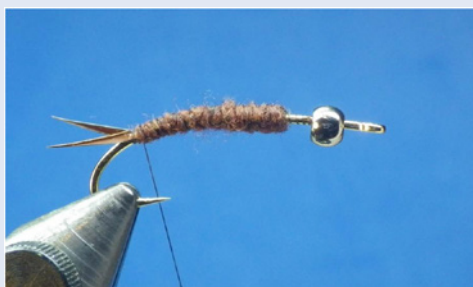
Hook:	TMC 200R
	Size 4- 14
Bead:	Brass or Tungsten
Thread:	8/0 Uni Black or
	Dark Brown
Tail:	Brown Goose Biots
Bib:	Gold Wire
	Size Brassie
Underbody	Any Dark Dubbing
Abdomen:	Peacock Herl
Wing Case	Pheasant Tail or
	Turkey Tail
Legs:	Hungarian Partridge
Thorax:	Natural Hare's Mask



Step 1.  
Put the bead on your hook and insert the hook into your vise. Start the thread behind the bead and wrap a smooth base back to the bend of the hook.



Step 2.  
Tie in two goose biots to form the tail. They should be about a hook gap in length. Form a dubbing noodle on your tying thread.



Step 3.  
Wrap the dubbing noodle forward to form a tapered underbody. Return your thread to the bend of the hook.



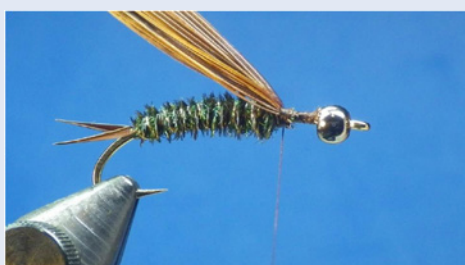
Step 4.  
Tie in a length of wire at the bend of the hook.



Step 5.  
Tie in a half dozen peacock herl fibers at the bend of the hook.



Step 6.  
Wrap the peacock forward to the  $\frac{2}{3}$  point on your hook. Secure the butt ends and clip excess. Counter wrap the wire forward to the  $\frac{2}{3}$  point. Secure the wire and clip excess.



Step 7.  
Tie in a clump of pheasant tail fibers at the  $\frac{2}{3}$  point on your hook.



Step 8.  
Prepare the partridge feather by pulling off the fuzzy fibers from the base. Pull the remaining fibers back from the tip.



Step 9.  
Tie in the partridge, upside down, at the  $\frac{2}{3}$  point.



Step 10.  
Form a dubbing noodle with hare's mask dubbing.



Step 11.  
Wrap the dubbing noodle forward to form the thorax of the fly.



Step 12.  
Pull the partridge feather forward, directly on top of the hook and secure behind the bead. Clip excess.



Step 13.  
Pull the pheasant fibers forward to form the wing case. Secure and clip excess.



Step 14.  
Form a small dubbing noodle on your thread and dub a small section behind the bead. Whip finish. Go fish!





# MNTU EDUCATION UPDATE

JUNE 2023

By Amber Taylor, MNTU Education Program Supervisor



Last year when I was writing the education update for June's newsletter, we had recently learned that the education grant submitted to LCCMR was no longer under consideration and there were a lot of unknowns about the future of MNTU education. However, thanks to generous donations from chapters around the state and The Jeffers Foundation, our education team of two along with a handful of dedicated volunteers were able to pull off another fun, engaging, and successful year for the 2022-2023 Trout in the Classroom participating schools.

This year, I am writing with a much different outlook because as many of you know, our LCCMR grant proposal was approved and voted for during the legislative session, in addition to funds received for the essential habitat work MNTU does around the state. We now have the resources to continue teaching thousands of future environmental stewards about Minnesota's watersheds through the Trout in the Classroom program, while also working to protect and restore our creeks, streams, and rivers. Thank you to everyone that had a part in making it happen!

In May, the MNTU Education Committee held its first meeting. The main purpose of this committee is to discuss ways to fund our education programs long term after this next LCCMR grant is completed in June 2025. We hope by starting the conversations and brainstorming now, we can have a solid plan developed by then. The committee is made up of chapter members from around the state and therefore also allows for collaboration and learning about the ways in which each of their chapters engage with youth education.

Spring is always a busy time for MNTU education and this year was no different! We worked with over a thousand students, leading and assisting with 20 of the over 50 trout releases happening around the state, teaching lessons about fly casting, watershed ecology, aquatic insects, and more. A few of the many highlights this release season include a group of 250 (yes, 250) seventh graders getting to assist the MNDNR with stocking rainbows into the Vermillion river during their release event. They did a great job carrying the heavy, writhing nets full of fish to the river's edge and gently (for the most part) getting them into the water. During lunch, this school's art teacher, Mr. Ted Hansen that many of you know, pulled out his own fly fishing gear and landed half a dozen of those trout with many students cheering him on. A special thank you to TJ Debates and Mark Nemeth with DNR fisheries for their patience and willingness to participate in the mayhem of that many middle schoolers in order to bring them this once in a lifetime opportunity!

Another highlight was my first trip to Bemidji to assist with their school's trout release. I went up a day early and had the pleasure of fishing with



**BEMIDJI TIC STUDENTS WATCH THEIR NEWLY RELEASED TROUT FINGERLINGS SWIM ALONG THE SHORE OF A RIVER. THE HEADWATERS CHAPTER ESTABLISHED THE FIRST TIC PROGRAM IN MINNESOTA AT BEMIDJI'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN 2007.**

Jim McCracken, Steve Young, and Bob Wagner, three of the many dedicated education volunteers in the Headwaters chapter. Jim and Steve had done some scouting the day before and found a great panfishing spot on one of the many beautiful lakes in the area. Some firsts for me were catching a crappie on a fly rod, fishing from a boat, using a popper (so fun), and bringing home dinner in the form of some nice crappie filets. A huge thank you to these gentlemen for providing me such a wonderful fishing experience and to Bob and Val for hosting me!

The trout release the next day was a great success, with 150 students visiting the Clearwater River. This day is fully led by chapter volunteers! They taught activities about trout ecology, aquatic insects, river morphology and more. In addition to supporting Trout in the Classroom, they also coordinate and lead a fly fishing program with fifth grade students, teaching casting, fly tying, and getting them on the water to actually do some fishing each year. The Headwaters chapter sets a high bar for their engagement with youth education.

Each year, teachers must complete an end of year report as a required component of their DNR permit. Part of this report is a write up about the year to include highlights, challenges, and a

summary of student participation. Below are snippets from teachers about their year in Trout in the Classroom. If you are interested in learning more about MNTU youth education and ways to get involved, please contact Amber at [education@mntu.org](mailto:education@mntu.org).

**Parkers Prairie High School:** Our year in MNTIC has once again been an exceptional experience that both my stu-

dents and parents have raved about. We started out the year exploring, catching and learning about macroinvertebrates, and how they relate to water quality and fit into a trout ecosystem and food web. We took a field trip to Spruce Hill Park to collect macroinvertebrates in the fall.

We then started preparing our tank for trout shortly after our fall field trip. I gave the students a list of questions to



**AFTER RELEASING THEIR TROUT FINGERLINGS, MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WADED IN THE VERMILLION RIVER IN SEARCH OF AQUATIC MACROINVERTEBRATES, CRAYFISH, AND MINNOWS.**





EDUCATION PROGRAM SUPERVISOR AMBER TAYLOR INSTRUCTS A NOVICE ANGLER HOW TO ROLL CAST ALONG THE VERMILLION RIVER. THIS STUDENT IS PART OF A TROUT CLUB AT ONE OF OUR TIC SCHOOLS. THEY TIE FLIES, PRACTICE CASTING, AND GO ON FISHING TRIPS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

answer as they read through the program guide. This was awesome in helping them understand the ins and outs of tank care and trout environment, including the cycling of matter. The students were in charge of testing the water and making the water changes and feeding the trout, once needed. They checked the nitrates, nitrites, pH and ammonia daily, and then weekly once the trout were here. We then rounded out the unit dissecting a trout from a field day that needed to be euthanized. I was amazed at how many ways I could connect to our curriculum. While learning about binomial nomenclature, we talk about the scientific name of trout and each level of classification that trout fit into. When we were discuss-

ing DNA, we talked about how many pieces of DNA are in a trout cell. During the conversation about natural selection, we discuss what adaptations help trout survive. It just so perfectly fit into our curriculum and helped connect it all.

The kids loved seeing the trout grow and develop. They often commented about how much bigger they were looking, some would just sit and stare at them. I thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to raise trout. It has enriched the curriculum and opened my students' eyes to all the life around them and the impact and connection organisms have to one another. It also allowed me to get them outdoors and get into nature!

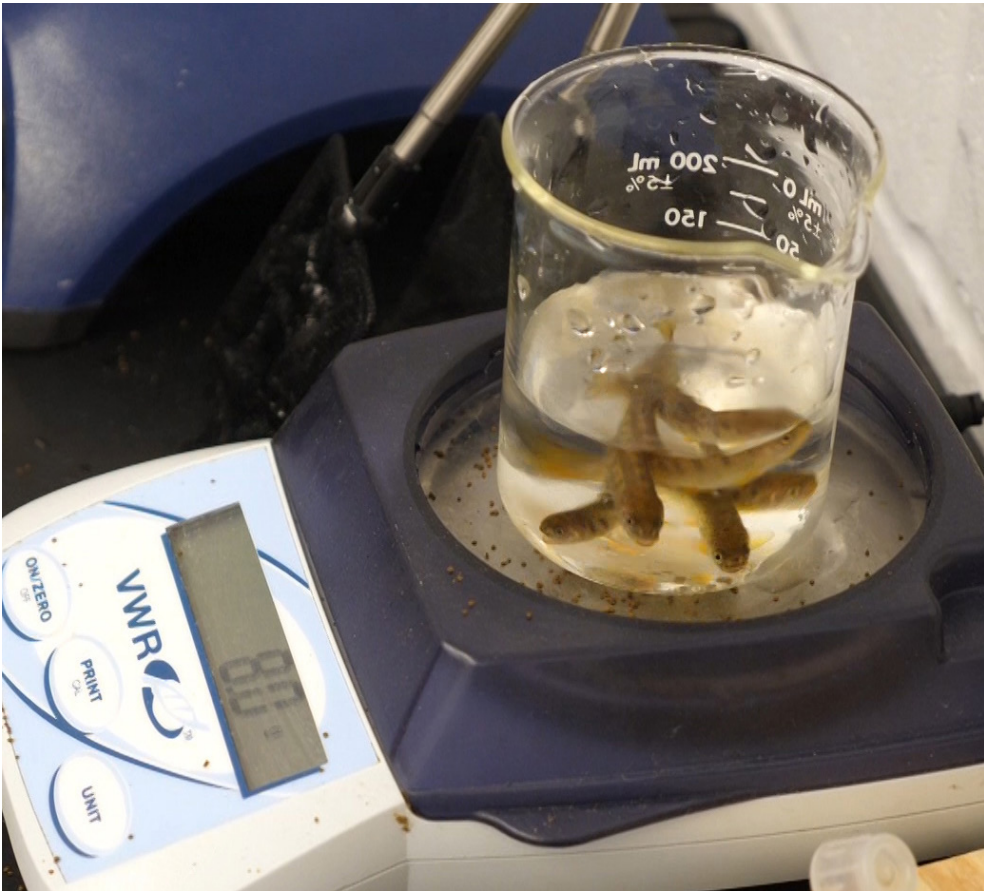
**Jane Goodall Environmental Sciences Academy:** Students had the opportunity to visit the DNR Crystal Springs cold-water fish hatchery where they witnessed the process of raising trout from eggs to fingerlings. It was a hands-on experience that deepened their understanding of trout's life cycle and habitat requirements. Students actively participated in tank maintenance activities, such as checking water quality parameters, feeding the trout, and monitoring their growth. These responsibilities fostered a sense of ownership and developed their skills in fish care and observation. This hands-on involvement allowed them to develop scientific inquiry skills, critical thinking, and a deep appreciation for the natural world.

The Trout in the Classroom program extended beyond the confines of the classroom, involving the entire school community. The program was integrated into the curriculum, and students from different grade levels had opportunities to visit the tank, ask questions, and learn from their peers' experiences. This school-wide involvement fostered a sense of unity and collaboration, promoting environmental awareness and stewardship throughout the school. The Trout in the Classroom program has proven to be a transformative experience for students, teachers, and the entire school community. The program has deepened students' understanding of trout biology, water quality management, and environmental conservation through hands-on activities, field trips, and student involvement. Looking ahead, the program aims to expand its impact, fostering a greater sense of stewardship and sustainable practices among students and the community.

The program's culminating event was the release day, where students released their mature trout into a nearby river or stream. Witnessing the fish they had nurtured swim freely in their natural habitat was a gratifying experience.



LEFT: A MNTIC TEACHER CHEERS ON ONE OF HIS 7TH GRADE STUDENTS AS SHE RELEASES A NET FULL OF YEARLING RAINBOWS INTO THE VERMILLION RIVER. THE STUDENTS DID A GREAT JOB OF GETTING THE FISH QUICKLY AND SAFELY FROM THE DNR TRUCK TO THE WATER. RIGHT: TROUT FINGERLINGS GETTING THEIR FINAL WEIGHT-IN BEFORE BEING RELEASED!





# WIN-CRES, STIHL, AND LANDOWNERS

ALL WIN!

By Mark Reisetter

Everyone appreciates a "win-win" scenario, when a mutual solution to a problem is reached and both parties benefit. On Wednesday, April 19, the Win-Cres Chapter of Trout Unlimited did better than that. With help from TUDARE and MNDNR Fisheries, they networked with 22 Stihl employees and the landowners of a stretch of Little Pickwick Creek in an outing that absolutely was a win-win-win!

The problem needing to be solved here was a section of stream overgrown with invasive trees and brush. Dustan Hoffman (who formerly was MNTU's Project Manager for SE MN with TUDARE, and currently is the Stream Habitat Specialist with the MNDNR Fisheries Office out of Lanesboro) offered some background information, explaining that last year, MNTU and MNDNR Fisheries identified some stream corridors with angling easements that perhaps wouldn't merit a full-scale in-stream habitat improvement project, but would benefit from the removal of shallow-rooted trees like box elder and willow. One of those areas designated was the site of our coordinated effort; a stretch of Little Pickwick Creek owned by Jim and Denise Albrecht, a few miles south of Pickwick, MN.

Two days prior to the work day, Win-Cres President Chuck Shepard and a few other chapter members met with Jim Albrecht and the Midwest Stihl Sales Team Manager Dan Pherson to do some reconnaissance on the site to better finalize plans for the work day. As the group walked the wooded stream corridor in about a foot of new snow, Pherson explained that "2023 marks the third year that the Midwest Stihl sales team will partner with a Driftless Region TU chapter to participate in a stream cleanup day. Our goal in this partnership is to help empower TU chapters to achieve their stream restoration goals and for us to get our hands dirty and help a chapter complete a major workday."

When the work day arrived, most of the snow had melted, but the morning thunderstorm delayed the start by a couple hours. The rest of the day was overcast, but free of rain; allowing the newly formed team to work. The Stihl contingent wielded every size chainsaw, whether gas fired or battery driven! The TU crew dragged and carried brush, limbs, and blocked trunks out of the immediate riparian corridor, making large brush piles to be burned at a later date. It dried out enough that Jim Albrecht made his skid loader with grab hooks available, which really made the brush piles grow quickly.

Dusty Hoffman, who was onsite to work, explained the benefits of opening up a stream corridor: "Removing the invasive vegetation allows sunlight to reach the forest floor and streambed, promoting growth of native grasses, forbs, and aquatic vegetation. Research has shown aquatic invertebrates in streams with groundwater spring flows,



BOX ELDER TREES WERE REMOVED FROM THE LITTLE PICKWICK CREEK STREAM CORRIDOR.

such as we have in the SE MN Driftless Area, benefit from additional sunlight reaching the stream, while the temperatures of the streams are minimally warmed."

Sara Strassman and Paul Krahn of TUDARE also came to spend the day working. After working all day, Sara said, "The Win-Cres and Stihl work day on Little Pickwick Creek was a treat! The camaraderie of the sawyers and Win-Cres volunteers, the generosity of Stihl, the grace of the Albrecht family, and the gift of a dry afternoon after a morning deluge made for a wonderful experience!"

Dan Pherson summed up the day by saying, "This year's project on Little Pickwick Creek was a tremendous success. It was amazing to see many folks from the Win-Cres Chapter of TU, TUDARE, and the Minnesota DNR chip in a helping hand. Combined with our team, there were over 30 people on the site and the results were impressive. At the end of the day, it was clear that all involved had a great sense of accomplishment, a smile on their face, and some sore muscles!"

Albrechts had opened up a large building in case a shelter was needed and which served nicely for the fabulous hot meal that Win-Cres provided at the hands of Chapter Vice-President Dave Schulz and his wife Connie! Win-Cres Treasurer Tom Stoa had submitted an application for the Stihl grant in each year that it had been offered, and the chapter was overjoyed this year to have been selected. In addition to the Stihl employees that came from at least five different states in the Midwest to offer their time working their saws on a stream project, Stihl gave Win-Cres a \$1,500 certificate to be redeemed for Stihl products at a local Stihl retailer. In addition, the Stihl folks went above and beyond the terms of the grant by also donating a demo brush cutter and two pairs of chaps to the chapter!

If your chapter would like a chance to

win a workday with Stihl and some equipment to help with your chapter's volunteer labors, submit a letter of interest that describes your chapter's volunteer activities, your priority work areas or projects, and how you would make use of a workday and equipment to help improve trout habitat and fishing access in your area. Submissions should be sent to Sara Strassman at [sara.strassman@tu.org](mailto:sara.strassman@tu.org) by September 30.

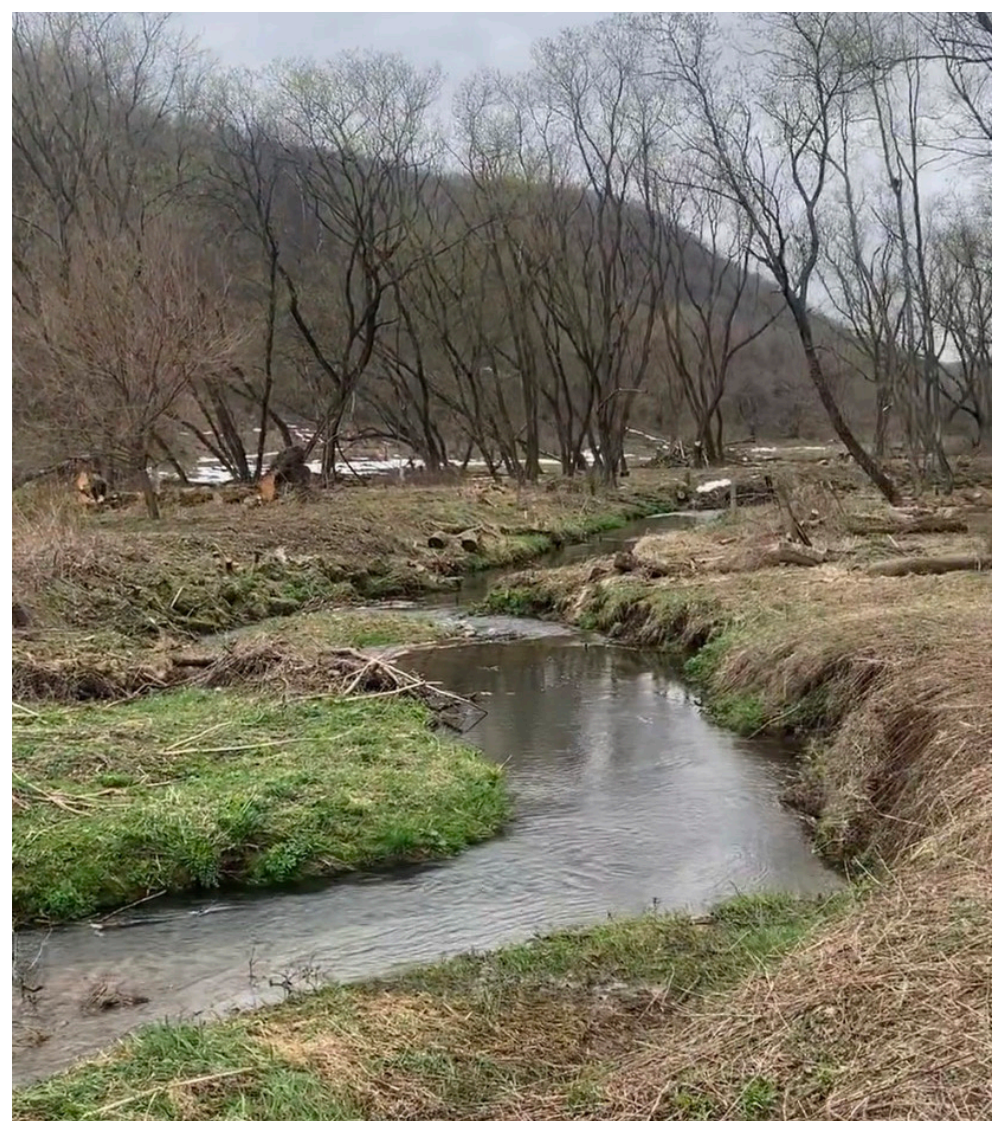
The landowners are very pleased with the results of the work day as they continue to be stewards of their earthly slice of heaven, and that's a big win!

Stihl met all their goals of getting their sales staff out to use their products in

a meaningful way, while also building sales staff unity. Dan Pherson said the day was "well organized and likely the most productive work day we have ever participated in!" That's certainly another win!

The Win-Cres Chapter of Trout Unlimited gained some high quality equipment, some new friends, and was able to accomplish, with some great help, an improvement of a cold water fishery! A very big win!

*Editor's Note: Mark Reisetter serves as the Southern MN Vice Chair for Minnesota Trout Unlimited. He is a retired fly fishing guide and Win-Cres Chapter board member.*



A BEAUTIFULLY CLEARED SECTION OF STREAM AFTER THE WORK DAY.





LEFT: A STIHL EMPLOYEE BLOCKING UP A LARGE WILLOW USING A SAW WITH A 36" BAR.  
 RIGHT: AN IMPRESSIVE LINEUP OF STIHL EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEER VEHICLES AT THE ALBRECHT FAMILY FARM.

# PHOTOS

## CONSIDERING OUR PISCATORIAL WORLD FROM BEHIND A LENS

By Bob Luck

I try to resist the urge to photograph every pet, kid, sunset, or car crash that draws my attention. Putzing around with my phone is not exactly conducive to experiencing the moment, and most of my photos serve no other purpose than to train the A.I. tools that will be used to enslave us. But as any Star Trek fan knows, resistance is futile, and I have managed to accumulate a few zillion photos on my phone, with a back-up to the cloud in case I drop the phone in a stream.

Yesterday, to confirm a hunch, I typed “fishing” into the search bar of my photo app, and came back with 944 hits from the past five years. I then typed in my wife’s name and got 745. If I add photos of my daughter, the number climbs to 953, but a fair number of those show her fishing, so I’m not sure where they count. Let’s just say that, if my photo collection is any indication, fishing plays an outsized role in my life.

I take all my photos with my phone. A couple of years ago, I got one of those waterproof stunt cameras with mounting brackets and a chest harness. After fooling around with the camera settings for a couple of days, and struggling with the editing software, I put the camera in storage and haven’t taken it out since. My phone is always with me, it takes still photos and video, and I know how to work the flash and the timer. If I need to know anything else, I can ask a nine-year-old. It may not take the highest quality photos, but I suspect an expensive SLR camera would improve my picture taking about as much as a \$2000 rod would improve my casting, and it would be a nuisance to lug around.

As the season progresses, fewer of my fishing photos feature fish, particularly when I am fishing alone. After a few weeks, fish start to look pretty similar, and the landscape gets more attractive as the trees leaf out in May. I will still take photos of what the DNR refers to as



BIG PICKWICK CREEK WINDS THROUGH A PASTURE IN SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA.

“memorable trout”: browns over 16”, or brook trout over 10”. I push the handle of my net into the bank to create a makeshift pen to hold the fish while I pull out my camera and set it up on a mini-tripod. I set the timer to 10 seconds, get myself in position, pull the fish out of the net and say “cheese.” Some of my friends take nice photos of releasing fish: it is faster, easier, and less stressful for the fish, but something in me wants proof that it is actually I who caught that trout. I could suppress this character flaw by leaving the tripod behind, but what if that is the day I catch a 20-incher?

The vertically challenged Driftless scenery is short on features like snowcapped peaks and plunging waterfalls. I once circulated a video of my friend Chris Walker playing a nice brown on Hay Creek to some other buddies. One of them, who

lives in Utah, commented that it took him a while to figure out which way the water was flowing. But the lack of drama in the landscape brings out more subtle beauty: the tone of the water as it flows into and out of the shade, a white pine standing on a ledge in early spring, surrounded by bare maples, or a moss-covered boulder in the middle of the stream, heaved into place by a long-ago flood. My favorite landscape photo shows Big Pickwick Creek winding through a pasture in southeast Minnesota. In the background, a red barn sits at the base of hills covered with early autumn foliage. Much better than anything I ever took in Montana or Colorado.

Most of my fishing photos are people photos that happen to involve fishing. There is one of my college roommate modeling his waders in the parking

lot. Another one showing my Japanese friend Michiaki holding his wife by her wader belt to keep her from being towed into the current by a large rainbow. Last spring, I took a man and his 12-year-old grandson fishing on the Kinnickinnic. It was a cold, rainy day, and nothing was biting. Just before we had to leave the stream, a hatch of blue-winged olives came off, and they caught several fish swinging wet flies. I can’t describe their joy in words, but if I showed you the photo I wouldn’t need to. My wife doesn’t fish, but if she did, I have no doubt that I would need to upgrade the storage on my phone.

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



# 2022 ICE OUT BLUES

## LAKE TROUT DEEP IN THE WILDERNESS

By Joel Tiburzi



SAGANAGA LAKE (ENTRY POINT 55) ON MAY 18, 2022.

Spring was late last year in northern Minnesota. All my journal reads for May Day, 2022 is “34 inches of ice still, time to make plan B. I hope I’m wrong.” This doesn’t say much, but it’s true insofar that it was a slog of a spring. For anglers statewide it was nearly death. The waiting and waiting, sitting at the fly-tying desk with low eyes night after night. As winter prolonged, excitement for open water angling started to feel a bit more like dread. Inland lakes looked dusty and rotten well into May. When they start to take on that look, I wonder to myself how many ice houses and cars will be lost. The sidewalks in town became too ugly to look at, but if you didn’t look, they could take you down in a second. Despite the ice and crud that covered every bit of ground, I recall the lake walk, a paved trail downtown, being steadily backed up with runners. It wasn’t because of any nice weather, that’s for sure. No one was going to wait around anymore.

After two months of near insanity, the gray sky, cutting wind and piddling rain subsided. Paddling conditions finally started to take shape. Inland lakes started to shed ice. Alex, a dear friend of mine, turned out to have better foresight than I and reaped the benefits by serving me an “I told you so” as soon as we heard that the ice on Saganaga lake was starting to go. The planning for this canoe trip began in January, which gave us more time to obsess over details than I might have liked. That being said, having to reserve a permit so far in advance allows for excitement to really accumulate—which in some way shapes the trip itself. The anticipation stirs and sits and doubles, then boils over when the ice finally goes out. Our entry permit for May 18 was set, and so were we on seeing a handful of bucket-list lakes. Nothing can stop us now, I may have muttered to

myself. Had I known about the severe flooding on the Gunflint trail, I may have kept my mouth shut. We pushed onward, knowing that we might not make it to the trail’s end as we had planned. Steelhead fishing the North Shore streams was our backup plan, but I turned my head down at the idea of taking such measures. We eventually arrived after a very chatty ride in my cramped two-wheel drive pickup. At some point unknown, my front ball joints had failed, which added a nagging thunk to our conversation. Like any good adventure, it had begun before the trailhead.

Heading north from Duluth are a few markers that I rarely, if never, stop at, but always take appreciative note of. These places always seem to make me drive a little faster. Some of them are:

- The Cross River falls. The Cross is

likely my favorite North Shore stream. On the west side of the river, a ways inland, is a lovely campsite on the Superior Hiking Trail. It was here where I experienced the heaviest mosquito attack of my life thus far. Wading deep in the river offered sanctuary from these forces, which probably explains much of my affection for it.

- A stunning barn and clear-cut view to Lake Superior atop of county road 7. I don’t know who lives there, but I’m sure they understand.

- A brown sign that reads “Wildflower Sanctuary” near the timber yard.

- Another chocolate-brown sign that says “George Washington Pines.” Another place I’ve never been to.
- Swamper Lake Wayside Rest. No way

am I resting here. Nothing about a prime moose sighting area says rest to me.

Upon our arrival at Saganaga lake, it was immediately evident that the ice had gone out just four days prior. The edge of the water was swelling and creeping into the parking lot. We were confused to see so few cars. We dumped our loose gear all over the gravel. Normally things would be better consolidated, but it was a hodgepodge in virtue of it being the first trip out. We brought my fathers beloved aluminum Osage, a two-seater canoe just sturdy enough to be a pain to carry, but durable enough to last with people like us. “It’s the best two hundred dollar purchase I’ve ever made” my dad says on occasion. I won’t go into depth on how I feel about the canoe. We rushed it off the pickup and skid it across the gravel without question. A kevlar ca-



A BELOVED COLD WATER SPECIMEN. KEEP ONE, RELEASE THREE.



noe wouldn't have fared well on this trip. The water was eerily smooth and calm, and had a menacing dark color to it. Paddling up the corridor, straight to the north was some lightning. It was hard to tell which way the weather was heading, but we were going west regardless. A "calm before the storm" granted us enough time to land on the northern tip of Englishman Island just before a hard rain came down. Weather-wise, the rest of our seven-day trip was mixed but mostly good. We had a few days of rain and a few days of sun. The wind seemed to be on our side for the most part. The mornings were cold enough to keep us socked in a couple times. Black flies were in full effect the entire trip, but they didn't bother us one bit. It puzzles me to Google search "black flies in Minnesota spring," and get prompted by an article titled "Pesky Biting Black Bugs in Minnesota." We spent our evenings watching these little bugs dominate the entire surface of a lake. Predictably, minnows would show up shortly thereafter and gulp away like they hadn't seen a bug all winter. It was exhilarating to see the water light up like that.

We traveled westward along the Canadian border, through Ottertrack Lake and across the northeastern arm of Knife Lake. En route we jugged up a rather steep and wet portage to spend a night on Gijikiki lake, which gave us access the next day to the most beautiful lake in the world, Lake of the Clouds. I mean that statement wholeheartedly, but should mention that the phrase "most beautiful lake in the world" gets tossed around quite a bit. Most of our time was spent scouring the ins and outs of bays, rounding peninsulas in hopes of finding a fishy situation. All that we struck that morning was a false portage that got us about 200 rods good. Our concentration on the fishing waxed and waned as always does. After some time hitting the water, I start to count clouds and hone in on birds. I never feel bad when this happens, because in some sense that's what fishing is all about. My attention drifts, usually starting somewhere in the sky, then goes downward to the undulations on the water's surface, and eventually inward, when random memories from middle school rise up from the depths. "You never know what you're gonna get," as they say. Thankfully, basic functions like hunger and thirst terminate these thoughts in time.

Alex had come all the way from western Montana for this canoe trip. Alex is a bright star. He was born a liaison between fun and whatever we're getting into. He provides amplitude. He has a reserve of silliness he can dip into whenever the appropriate time calls. He's never been afraid of honesty. If it's not my subconscious bringing up the weird childhood memories, it's him, loudly from the bow of the canoe. In our younger years, he was the friend that lived on the other side of the creek. If he wasn't biking over to hang out with us, his kind folks would always drive him. His father is a carpenter and would pull up in our alley in his metallic baby-blue minivan, always having a stack of comically long wooden boards strapped to the roof. His dad can be caught wearing some type of vest year-round. From the backyard we would wait and watch the side door roll open, and on cue Alex would step out into the alley, revealing a bunch of

junk and power tools behind him. Also his dog Thunder who was evidently going to keep his dad company at the job site that day. That was always an exciting moment. Today my relationship with Alex holds up well. If I were faced with a deserted island and three things of my choice, I would take Alex and two fishing poles.

"Lights out fishing" was another foolish expectation I mustered up in the extended winter months. Despite the immaculate timing of our trip, we didn't catch anything until the evening of day three. I knew that a well-rounded trip would have some hurdles, but I was beginning to worry that we were hitting a wall. Had Alex driven a thousand miles away from "God's country" to get the cold shoulder? He seemed cool about it. It wasn't until the first two fish were caught, by me, that he started to show any sign of wear. Leading up to the first catch were a few notable, and rather ominous events that set the stage. The first of which was an enormous skull and spine of a northern pike, washed up on gravel at the base of Ottertrack Lake's east-end portage. We were stunned and taken aback, confused as to if we were excited or horrified at the sight. Cutting through fog, at the next portage over we came up on a handsome bald eagle, perched on a flat rock ripping apart a fresh walleye. Lastly, was an absolute womp of a hit at the end of my line; a fleeting moment too heavy to really touch on. It was the first and only sign of lake trout thus far—a mere hit that turned into a hard goodbye. We were wishing badly that he would have stuck around longer. The accumulation of these events in such a short timespan made for a cold and sobering ambiance. We went on a while without words, completely dumbfounded.

It didn't matter how much we knocked; it was clear to us by now that fish would come if it was meant to be. We tried all sorts of crankbaits, spoons, flies, fly lines, techniques, and trolling speeds, but in the end came one simple recipe that yielded results. Fluorocarbon leader secured to a spool of 12-pound braided line, tied off to a hammered gold and blaze orange Krokodile spoon (about a palm's length), a quiet and gentle trolling stroke was all necessary. No split shot to mess up the lure's action, and no fish-finders distracting us. I had to resist fabricating the notion of a "magic lure" on this trip; every fish that we saw hit the same spoon. The bite was so slow on some of the days I caught myself polishing fingerprints off pieces in-between casts, thinking there was a chance that fish could see them. I ran the emotional drill, going from patience and wit in the morning to exhausted and indifferent come around six or so.

Finally on the third day we broke our curse, and corrected that horrendous womp from the day before. It all came together. We finally had a lake trout on, and in clear shallow water. The fight consisted of three or four long runs, the fish gunning straight downward. Eventually we got the fish up, and it came to a halt about nine feet beneath us. I remember clearly its jet-black form sulking there in plain sight, sitting dead still underneath the boat. It wouldn't budge. I couldn't believe how well it was able to stay put. No head shakes, no running, it just sat there like a hunk of stone. Alex had to



ALEX BRINGS ICE-OUT DREAMS TO FRUITION.

nearly fold the fish in half to get it in the net—a memory forever burned into my mind. The jaws on this fish told stories. The skin on its back looked dark and old. I was anxious to return it quickly, though I don't doubt for one second that it could have walked away on land, breathing air if it wanted to. It was wise, powerful, and demanded respect.

A couple of days later, in an exhausted tone, Alex let the bottom of his breath go and emitted "I've just got to get something man." We quickly took action and trekked over to Amoeber Lake for the day, knowing that we had to change this trajectory. I tossed him the same orange and hammered gold spoon I had been using all along, sheepishly of course. The wind picked up considerably as the afternoon came on. We learned to use the wind to our advantage by paddling hard against it to reach calm water, then dropping most of our line before taking off again, this time with the wind. We cruised the shoreline and around points, hardly working at all. Eventually, come dead afternoon we drifted around a jut-out of rock where Alex struck silver. There was going to be no dabble or dabble with this one. He fought the fish with a face of absolute bliss and simplicity, but his body was complicated, saying hurry up. His right forearm lifted the weight up then dropped it back down, whilst reeling it in with his left in perfect tandem. The fight was no more than a minute long. In the net it went, and onto shore we landed. The backside of the jut-out gave us shelter from the wind and waves, and thus prompted a small chrome flask to come out of my life jacket. It happened to be there for this exact occasion. We tied up the boat and sat down on the warm rock, facing the sun. We gazed over the foamy blue and white chop, and I had a feeling that tears were coming but I wasn't sure from whom. That evening I wrote:

5/22/22 Albeit the day started off bloody cold with my legs crossed and head down, it turned into one of the best in a long time. The peace and low-stakes of it all. I've been longing a day like today to come.

A year later and I've got the ice-out blues again. It's been another snow-heavy winter up here, with consistently warm temperatures. What this says about ice out I don't know, neither will I dare attempt to say. Some people bypass this time of year by snow birding. Perhaps they are out chasing ocean fish or hiking on volcanic rock. I'm sure many snow birds are happy to just to be sitting somewhere in the sun, so long as it's Arizona or further south. Those that stick around Minnesota for this time of year have to put their efforts elsewhere, perhaps into knitting or maple tapping or skiing slush. I am here, also happy, but also restless despite doing these things. Spending so much energy dwelling on the ice out is bound to make one wonder: how long is this obsession going to last anyway? What is all this about? It's at this point where I need to keep this last trip in mind, and the spring before that and the one before. One minute again on the open water and these doubts wash away, like the question never came up. The thought that I won't outlast this love comes out, and springs a fantastic feeling.

*Joel is from Decorah Iowa and now lives in Duluth Minnesota. Behind a long list of interests and outdoor pursuits, he works for a non-profit ski area that delivers nature-based programming to the community. Skiing, fishing, and writing are a few of these pursuits that both yield great joy and propel him forward.*



# ELECTROSHOCKING

## A WINDOW INTO STREAM HEALTH

By John Weiss



MNDNR FISHERIES CREW ELECTROSHOCKING WITH A GENERATOR AND SMALL BARGE.

On May 8, Travis Viker was ready for a change.

For more than a month, the Department of Natural Resources fisheries technician in Lanesboro had been spending many of his working days pulling a small barge loaded with a generator and tubs up medium to larger streams throughout the Southeast as part of the DNR'S annual electroshocking. Or he carried a portable generator up smaller streams. It's a traditional part of the job he started in 2015. "Generally, the technician pulls the boat," he said.

Either way, it's a lot of work. "I need some help pulling it through the riffles

at times," he said. "It's a full-body workout, let me put it that way....I don't need to go to the gym afterwards." Being in the middle of a larger crew, it's also his job to watch out for others to make sure they don't fall; even if they do, the electrical charge isn't strong enough to hurt, maybe only giving someone a little tingle.

But it's work he enjoys. "I get to see all the fish," he said. "Every stream is kind of different." The crew mostly shocks trout but now and then, a sucker or even a rare slimy sculpin floats up. There are small lampreys in streams but they are hard to net because they are slippery, he said. This year, they twice had a trout tri-

fecta in pools—a brown, brook and rainbow trout.

He does get a break now and then from pulling to let him take it a bit easier, let others pull the barge. And there are days when it's raining too hard or the streams and rivers are too high and dirty to shock, though they have a long list of waters that need to be shocked and there's often one that's low and clear enough for the work. Others either carry long metal probes with a loop on the end to send electrical impulses through the water to stun the fish; others have a small net like a lacrosse stick to grab the fish. Some fish just slowly float up, a few jump. As workers move upstream, the barge slow-

ly begins to sink down in front with the weight of fish and water. Once heavy, it's moved off so others can count, weigh and measure fish for length.

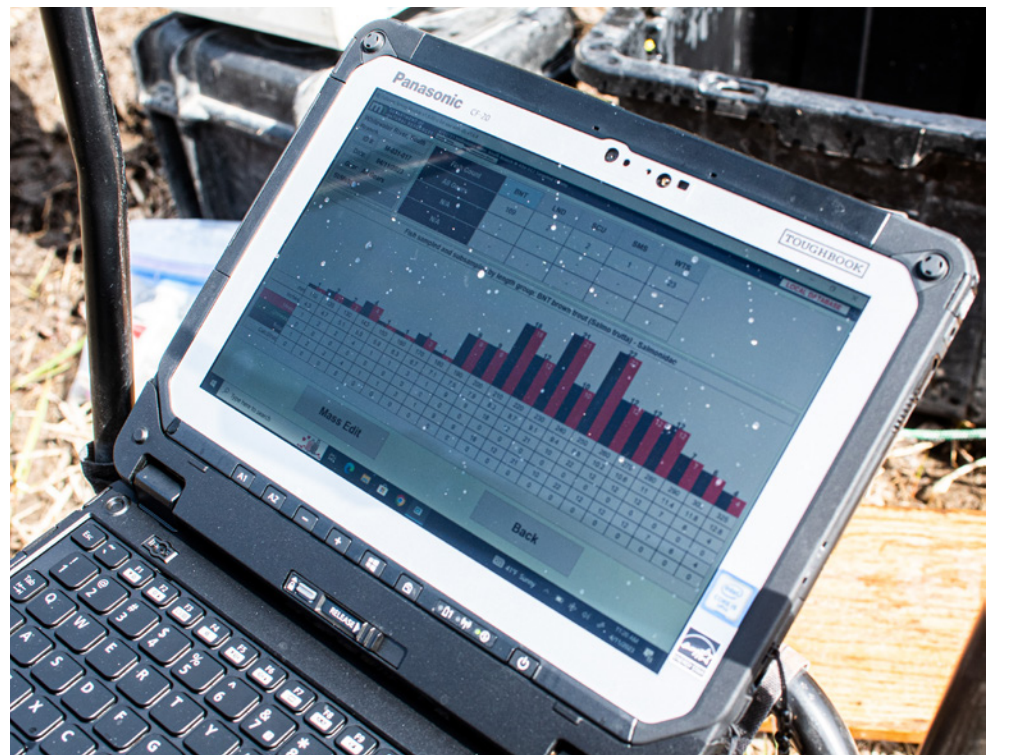
It's a job Viker looks forward to because he knows it's spring. "Always ready for spring in Minnesota," he said.

When it's nearly over, he's equally happy. "I'm not disappointed," he said. "I'm ready to switch gears" to fixing stiles or doing other work. But he added, "I always know it's going to come around in fall."

The work, besides being good exercise, is critical for caring for the streams.



LEFT: SOME FISH JUMP OUT OF THE WATER WHEN MET WITH THE ELECTRICAL CURRENT AND ARE NETTED BY THE MNDNR CREW. RIGHT: INFORMATION FROM TROUT WEIGHED AND SOMETIMES MEASURED IS QUICKLY ADDED TO A COMPUTER.





“It tells you the health of the stream,” said Doug Dieterman, a Department of Natural Resources fisheries researcher who is one of the main people who take all the data from the shocking and other sources to see how streams are doing. All fish are counted, even suckers. What’s interesting is that certain fish prefer certain kinds of habitat, maybe shallow fast riffles or deep slow pools, he said.

What kinds of fish are in a river or stream is not only fun to know but also tells a lot about that health, he said. The Index of Biotic Integrity was developed nearly 50 years ago, using species and abundance of fish as a way to know how good the water is—certain fish need certain kinds of water. Many trout, for example, indicate water is good shape because they need clean, cooler water. If a stream has only carp and bullheads, that means it’s troubled water.

Without shocking, managers would be at a huge disadvantage. “It guides almost all of our decisions we make, everything from an environmental review and where you might want to do a project,” said Melissa Wagner, area fisheries supervisor in Lanesboro.

Another critical use for shocking is deciding which streams will get stocked brown fingerlings, she said. They study a stream for three years and review the data before deciding. “A lot of people think we dump fish in everywhere and we are not assessing what we are doing, but we actually are,” she said.

The DNR wants to buy more easements to offer more anglers places to fish, and also to spread out the pressure, she said. Again, they need shocking data to know if a stream is worth the money.

There’s one more thing: “It’s interesting to learn what’s in those streams,” she said.

It’s been done for decades on bluf-land streams. At times, they get done around mid-afternoon, but one time, they worked into the dark on the South Branch of the Whitewater River because it was so loaded with fish, said Vaughn Snook, assistant Lanesboro supervisor.

Ten long-term monitoring streams get shocked twice a year each year, Wagner said, and the department tries to shock all the others at least once every 10 to 15 years. The 10 are the South Branch Whitewater, Beaver and Trout Valley in the Whitewater, Garvin Brook near Stockton, Gribben near Lanesboro, Middle Branch Whitewater, South Branch Root River upstream of Forestville, Trout Run near Chatfield and Winnebago, Wagner said.

Some streams have been shocked for 30 years, some a few decades longer, Dieterman said. The South Branch Whitewater station was especially poignant this year because a major fish kill walloped its trout population eight years ago; this year, it was full of trout, some up to 16 inches.

Long-term monitoring waters are needed to give a wider picture of what’s happening, he said. If they just hit all streams every decade or so, they wouldn’t know if a stream had fewer trout because it’s hurting or it just had a poor year class



EACH FISH IS COUNTED, WEIGHED AND MEASURED FOR LENGTH.

or two and the water is really in good shape, he said. Only looking now and then would show trout numbers “bouncing all over the place,” he said. Occasional shocking wouldn’t “have context to put an individual year into context of a longer time frame,” he said.

About 20 years ago, they decided that shocking wasn’t enough because it didn’t tell researchers all they needed, Dieterman said. They were seeing variability but couldn’t figure out why, so they began to also look at habitat, temperature, flow, bank cover, woody debris, water

levels and other physical factors. A rule of hydrology is that you need 20 years of data to see what’s happening, he said. So far, “I don’t see a lot of changes in the physical habitat, so that’s probably not it,” he said.

Besides the regular shocking, the DNR does more for management plans to see if it’s worthwhile to buy a fishing easement, Wagner said. They like to get one shocking station of maybe 150 yards for each reach of the water. “We try to do stations we have shocked in the past,” she said. Also, when they want to stock

the new Minnesota Driftless brook trout this summer, they need to know more of what’s in a stream now, she said. “We get a holistic view of the stream.”

*A shorter version of this story ran in the Root River Current online magazine.*

*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.*



MELISSA WAGNER SCOOPS UP A TROUT ELECTROSHOCKED ON THE SOUTH BRANCH OF THE WHITWATER RIVER WHILE TRAVIS VIKER WATCHES. BOTH WORK FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN LANESBORO.



# JAPANESE KNOTWEED

## A FORMIDABLE INVASIVE

By Chuck Shepard



JAPANESE KNOTWEED FORMS IMPENETRABLE THICKETS IN MANY PLACES, DISPLACING NATIVE PLANTS AND MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO MOVE ALONG THE STREAM CORRIDOR.

Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), recognized by the World Conservation Union as one of the world’s worst invasive species, has established a toehold on several southeast Minnesota streams. Colonies have been found on the South Fork of the White-water, Garvin Brook, and Maple Creek.

The plant was transported from Japan to England in the mid-19th century where it was established at the Royal Botanical Garden at Kew. From there it was spread by gardeners throughout the world. It is a recognized problem in Europe, Canada, New Zealand, and the US. It was sold by garden centers in Minnesota for many years. The plant has a fondness for wet sites. It spreads primarily through its roots, but it can be spread by cuttings and seed as well. On Garvin Brook it may have become established by cuttings washing downstream from above, or possibly brought in on the tracks of heavy equipment used in a habitat project.

The worst infestation I have seen is on Waterloo Creek in Iowa. It appears to have spread from a ridgetop planting down a gully to the stream corridor just

downstream of Dorchester. From that junction it has spread three miles downstream to the Upper Iowa River. It is now established on the Upper Iowa and is headed for the Mississippi River. It forms impenetrable thickets in many places, displacing native plants and making it difficult to move along the stream corridor. Much of the infested land is owned by the Iowa DNR; there has been no visible effort at control thus far.

**Identification:** The colonies have multiple stems and are usually five to eight feet in height. The stems in mature colonies resemble bamboo: they are hollow and have intermittent nodes. The leaves are heart-shaped, attached to a small stem that is often red. The plant has cream-colored blossoms in August and September. In the fall the leaves have a characteristic brick-red color (see photos); colonies are also easy to spot when they emerge in late May/early June.

**Control of this plant is a challenge; three approaches have been used.**

**Spraying:** This is restricted to a short period of time just before the first frost, about two to three weeks. The Win-

Cres Chapter of TU sprayed colonies on Garvin year after year with limited success. Others have had better results.

**Injecting stems:** This is labor-intensive, but effective. Last year volunteers injected around 450 stems with Polaris along Garvin Brook, wiping out those colonies. Injecting can only be done on hollow stems and is of no use on small new shoots. The injecting season runs from June through the first frost.

**Hand pulling or digging:** Suitable only for small new shoots. Win-Cres has limited experience with this. We pulled small shoots last year, but have not been back to see how it turned out. It is labor intensive. All materials must be bagged, hauled off site, dried and burned. Any cuttings left behind can re-root.

Sites need to be monitored for three years after treatment, as regrowth is common.

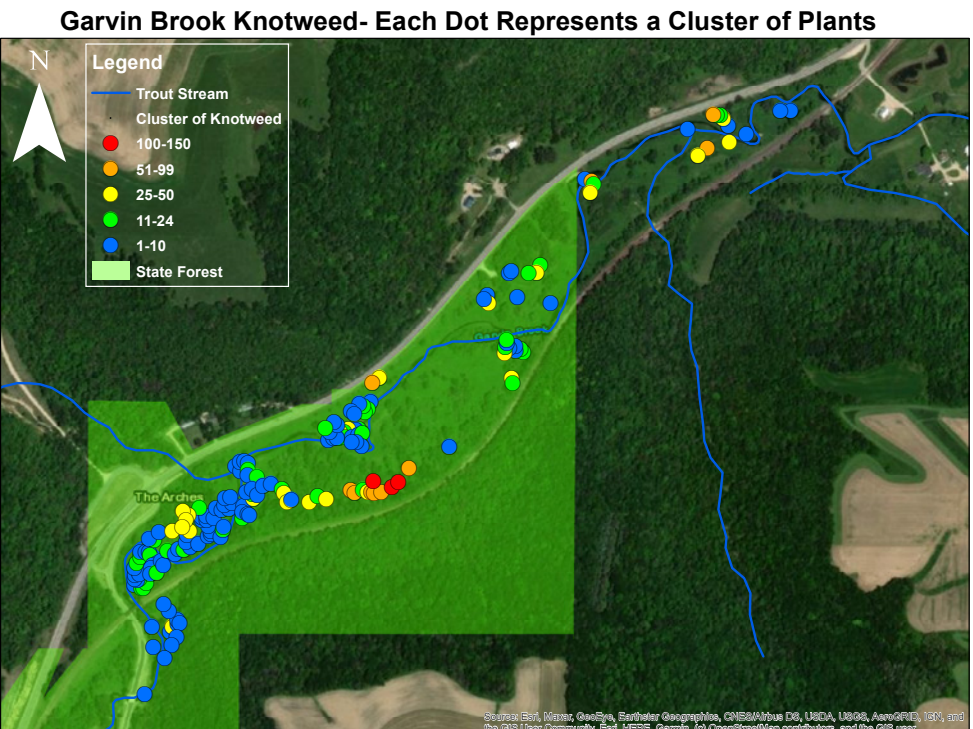
Europeans are experimenting with biological control, with uncertain results so far.

Win-Cres regards Garvin Brook as our home water. We have been involved

with habitat projects on the stream for 25 years. Win-Cres members mow paths along the stream to improve access in the summer. We have been battling knotweed for at least six years. The biggest infestation is on State Forest land. Despite our efforts, the number of colonies has increased and is clearly beyond the capacity of volunteers (see map). We have been working with Kevin O’Brien of the Lewiston DNR Forestry office. Last year the DNR had hired a contractor with an ATV and tank sprayer to spray their land in the fall. Unfortunately, an early frost thwarted that plan. Forestry plans to make another attempt this fall.

This plant will be with us for the foreseeable future. My suggestion is to get on any new sites early and aggressively. Monica Chandler with the MN Department of Agriculture is a resource for anyone with a new infestation or questions.

*Editor’s Note: Chuck Shepard is the president of the Win-Cres chapter of MN Trout Unlimited.*



LEFT: A SITE THAT WAS INJECTED 10 MONTHS PREVIOUSLY. RIGHT: THE MAP SHOWS THE EXTENT OF KNOTWEED ON FORESTRY LAND ON UPPER GARVIN BROOK.



# TROUT TANKS VS WILD STREAMS

## YOUTH SERIES

By Jim Emery, MNTU Educator



STUDENTS TAKE CARE OF TROUT FROM THE EGG STAGE TO RELEASE DAY IN THE SPRING. REGULAR TASKS LIKE WATER CHANGES ARE CRUCIAL FOR HEALTHY TROUT.

You have an aquarium full of trout in your classroom. You have been taking care of the fish in your tank from the time they arrived as little orange eggs in December, and soon you'll watch the trout fingerlings swim off in the stream that will become their home.

The stream your trout are released into will have all the elements that the fish need in order to thrive, and it won't be an entirely new environment for them. By the time the fish are released, they will have spent the school year in conditions that you created for them, imitating the stream that will be their natural habitat.

To start with the obvious, you have a tank full of water. It's not as simple as just filling an aquarium with tap wa-

ter, which you've already learned from testing your aquarium's water regularly over the past several months. Streams have just the right water for trout, water that is cold, very clean, and free of pollutants. You've been doing much of the hard work that happens in a stream by changing water frequently, and monitoring its temperature and composition.

As your fish have grown they have created more waste. The waste that your fish excrete contains by-products called nitrites, which are toxic to your fish. The moving current in a stream cleans out much of this material, and is aided by the other living things in the natural environment. Plants and bacteria in a stream break the toxic nitrites down to nitrates, which are healthy for trout. Along with regular water changes, and

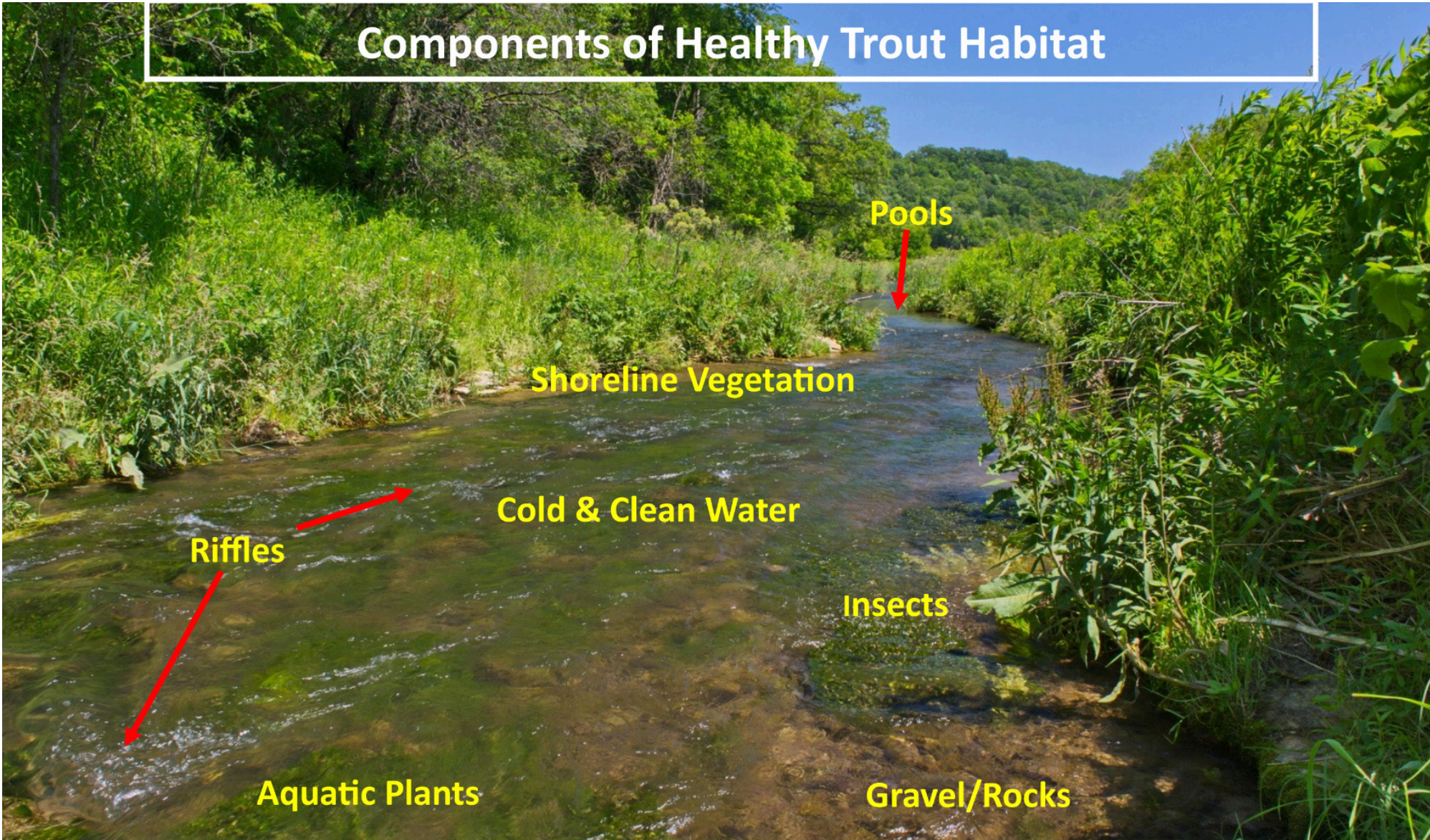
cleaning the waste material from the bottom of the tank, you might be using a bacterial additive in your water to speed that process along.

Those fish in the tank need to eat. Once the fish are in a stream, they will find nutrition from aquatic insects, many of which live as nymphs under the surface of the water, and others will emerge and land on the stream's surface for trout to eat. Until then, the trout will snack on the artificial food you've been sprinkling into your aquarium.

Another of the daily tasks has been monitoring the temperature of your tank. Trout need water that remains at a constant temperature of 50-53 degrees Fahrenheit. Many trout streams are fed from underground springs that continu-

ally refresh the stream with cool water. In your classroom, the tank temperature has been maintained by cooling the water with a chilling unit.

As you observe your fish swimming in their glass box, standing before them in a carpeted room under fluorescent lights, you might not feel like you are at a trout stream, but in a sense, you are. The stream where you release your trout has a delicate balance of natural elements that creates just the right environment for your fish to thrive once you release them. In order to raise the trout in your classroom, you've recreated those conditions. Enjoy watching your trout grow in their artificial stream, until release day, when they will start living in a real one.





# 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](mailto:jlenczewski@comcast.net) or at 612-670-1629.



A STUNNING DAY ON HAY CREEK. MIKE RIEMER PHOTO.



# OktoberFish



Wednesday October 25th, 2023

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Forgotten Star Brewery

Tickets at [www.twincitiestu.org/events](http://www.twincitiestu.org/events)



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### HABITAT HELPERS NEEDED

We need volunteers to assist with statewide 2023 habitat projects. To volunteer or receive information on opportunities to help with inspections and/or hands-on work, send an email to: [monitor@mntu.org](mailto: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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### COMMITTEE MEMBERS NEEDED

If you have an interest in the areas of advocacy, communication, education, fundraising, habitat, or inclusivity/diversity, please consider joining one of our committees. A key component of the strategic plan is to foster member involvement more directly with the work of MNTU. Your voice matters! Contact [chair@mntu.org](mailto:chair@mntu.org) with your committee interest.





# MNTU CHAPTER NEWS

## Gitche Gumee Chapter

The Duluth area broke the snowfall record this past winter with 140.1 inches (as of April 30). The last time we had a significant snow total like this was during the winters of 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. Remembering what that felt like is like remembering a mosquito bite from last summer. Yes, it's tough to remember, but what I can tell you is that the winter season was way too long for many folks. April's warmth and receding snow pack brought grins from ear to ear to many Northlanders. And with Spring, the steelhead showed up on cue with rising rivers and warming water which helped dull thoughts of our very long winter season. In the last MNTU newsletter, I was promoting an IF4 Film Festival event. Thank goodness Mother Nature provided sunny and dry skies on our event day. Thank you to Arrowhead Fly Fishers for partnering with us on producing a successful event. Huge thank you to all the sponsors and companies that helped make our event succeed and to all of you that bought tickets and supported us. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it had been a few years since we held a film festival. It was great to see old friends and meet new people excited to get involved with conservation. Looking back at this past year's program season, we had a full schedule with in-person chapter meetings.

The chapter will stay busy with a handful of events this summer. First, on July 8 we will be at the Trampled by Turtles concert held at Bayfront Festival Park. We were beyond thrilled to be invited to this event! Getting MNTU's name in front of 10,000 concert goers will bring awareness to all that we do. Later this summer, we will be partnering with the City of Duluth to offer Introduction to Fly Casting Clinics. This is our third year offering these clinics and we excited to have the opportunity to provide them again. Dates are July 12, July 19, and July 26 (all Wednesdays) from 6 to 8pm. If you know of anyone interested in learning how to fly fish, have

them contact us to participate. Lastly, we will be out on area streams throughout the summer working on several maintenance projects. Our goal this year is to get to many of our project sites and inventory the needs of each one so we can better plan future projects. Details about river maintenance events will be shared on our email newsletter and on our Facebook page.

If you'd like to get involved as a volunteer or are interested in receiving our e-newsletter to stay up to date with our chapter news, send me an email at [brandon.kime@gmail.com](mailto:brandon.kime@gmail.com).

Enjoy summer!

Brandon Kime

## Headwaters Chapter

We find ourselves hitting another milestone this year. That's right, our chapter is turning 30 years old. This fall we will have a program at our membership meeting where we will talk about the past, present, and future of our chapter.

Over the last year, we have been busy. We saw the return of the Frozen Fly Film Festival on March 7. This is one of the biggest fundraising events that we do. This year we thanked the teachers at Gene Dillon Elementary who make the Trout in the Classroom program successful. We held the meeting at Ruttger's Birchmont Lodge in Bemidji.

Our Community Fly Tying nights had record attendance and we had to separate the beginners from the experienced tiers just to have enough room. We had about a dozen nights of tying and we averaged about 15 participants per night. We also welcomed several new tiers including youths. We also had another great year at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo. This

year we even had a film in the showcase that was put together by Mr. Whittington, one of the teachers at Gene Dillon Elementary.

And lastly, we have wrapped up another year of our Youth Fly Fishing Program where we had 52 students, and by the time you read this, we will have had our release day for the Trout in the Classroom Program. We are expecting up to 150 kids to participate this year. Looking forward to the summer we will have our annual Pike Hunt on June 9 and 10 this year. We are also planning a return to the Youth Outdoor Activity Day in Alexandria on August 27, 2023. This free, family-friendly event sees over 2,400 youth per year exploring a variety of outdoor activities. Our chapter focuses on teaching participants how to cast a fly rod. We are always looking for volunteers. If Interested please let me know.

Kris Williams

## Hiawatha Chapter

Melissa Wagner, area DNR fisheries supervisor in Lanesboro, spoke in person at 125 Live at 7 p.m. May 1. Her topic was Driftless Trout Resource Management. About a dozen members were there in person or online.

Here are some highlights:

- She pointed to a graphic showing the number of trout in Gribben Creek, a small stream east of Lanesboro. It showed the number of adults fluctuating quite a bit but the number of young of the year was really wild, bouncing dramatically. "There are those cycles that occur," she said. But that's normal and even good. "We can't have record year classes year after year," she said. But she did note that the number of trout 12 inches or longer has been going up over the years.

- The number of brown trout fingerlings stocked is around 380,000 but the DNR would like to see that lowered even more

and maybe change which streams get the fish. Spring flooding and snowmelt really dictates survival of the little trout. An entire year class can be wiped out with the wrong conditions.

- The new Minnesota Driftless brook trout will be stocked in August. They are a new strain that was developed to replace Minnesota Wild. The new ones are made up of eggs and milt from three places where brook trout show no DNA from any outside source. All other brookies have some DNA from hatcheries outside the state. The hope is that the new strain will be stronger and more resilient than existing fish.

- The DNR is working to bring back slimy sculpins. The presence of the funny looking fish and brook trout are the best indicators of stream health.

- Getting more easements is a high priority.

- The DNR wants to have more good stiles on eased waters. To report a stile that needs work, email Melissa at [melissa.wagner@state.mn.us](mailto:melissa.wagner@state.mn.us)

- The area is seeing many more drift boats so the DNR is looking at adding more accesses for them. One that is now open is right below the Lanesboro Dam.

- They are looking at designating a lot more trout water. Temperature loggers are being used to know if the water is cool enough year round to hold trout. Vaughn Snook, assistant supervisor, says the designated waters could be revealed later this summer.

Dan Dauwalter, TU fisheries science director of national TU, spoke to the Hiawatha Chapter of TU via ZOOM April 3 at 125 Live.

Dan talked about WiseH20, which Hiawatha, Twin Cities and Kiap-TU-Wish chapters are using to monitor stream health. This is actually the beginning of a broad landscape assessment, and this citizens science is part of that. It's more of a coarse screening tool and also has an educational component. Kiap-TU-Wish began it, and it now has more than 1,000 readings since 2019. The goal is more than 1,700 by the end of this summer and 2,500 by end of 2024. Besides water quality, TU also learns about problems such as dams, erosion, cattle in streams etc. It's more baseline data.

Another aspect could be a GPS-based index for the Driftless.

They hope to go to many road crossings to see if perched culverts are stopping the free movement of trout, especially brook trout. TU is pushing to increase the numbers of brookies from here east (we are at the western edge of brookies' range).

John Weiss





# MNTU CHAPTER NEWS



## Twin Cities Chapter

I am writing this note a few days before our last chapter meeting of the season. We take the summer off to go fishing! Our last few chapter meetings have been held in person, with a Zoom option, and it has been nice to meet members again in person. We are planning a busy schedule of fishing outings, casting lessons and youth education events this summer. The best way to keep up with activities is to check out the TCTU website at [www.twincitiestu.org](http://www.twincitiestu.org). The "Events" page on our site has a calendar with everything that is going on, including many fishing skills programs and a weekend fishing trip in Preston on June 23-25.

### Twin Cities Habitat Update

Hay Creek is one of the best trout streams in Minnesota, and one of the closest to the Twin Cities. We have been doing a lot of work to restore Hay Creek, with more to come.

Last summer, we completed a restoration project just downstream of the DNR Parking Lot on Hay Creek Trail (GPS Coordinates: 44.502791158164, -92.56268238558056) This is a grassy, open stretch with easy-to-wade shallow riffles followed by deep runs and woody structure. It is a great place to take beginners. A few TCTU members recently did a "population survey" and caught fish between 8 and 13 inches out of nearly every run.

In April, we broke ground on another big project, just downstream of the 320th St bridge. We will finish in the summer with planting of prairie grass, and we ask anglers to refrain from fishing there until August.

One of the best trophy trout streams in the Twin Cities area is the Little Cannon.

The trout population is not that large, but there are some huge browns in the river! A stretch of the river south of Sogn was purchased by the Trust for Public Land and turned over to the DNR which has turned it into an Aquatic Management Area. Although nothing has been finalized yet, MNTU and TCTU are looking at doing a large-scale habitat project on this property. The AMA parking lot is off County 49 Blvd, on the south side of CR49 just before the west side of the bridge.

### Twin Cities Youth Education Update

The Twin Cities may not have as many trout streams as some other parts of the state, but we are "swimming" in another key resource: kids! MNTU and the Twin Cities Chapter have made a lot of progress in educating the next generation of conservationist/anglers and we plan to expand further. We just completed another year of the award-winning "Trout in the Classroom" experiential education program.

Now we are gearing up to host "Summer Fishing Skills" programs in local parks and nature reserves. Sometimes we teach kids how to fly fish for trout, more often we are showing them how to catch bluegills with worms, but every program exposes youth to fishing and conservation, and we all have a lot of fun. If you are interested in volunteering for a youth education program, please email us at [Education@twincitiestu.org](mailto:Education@twincitiestu.org). You can also find upcoming programs at the events page of our website: [www.twincitiestu.org](http://www.twincitiestu.org).

### The Studio: A Film from Trout Unlimited

TU has created a terrific 12-minute film featuring TCTU Board Member Scot Simmons.

The film shows Scot's path to creating a better life for himself and others as he strives to be a better role model for his own family. Fly fishing has helped him find his equilibrium. Scot has dealt with various forms of anxiety, PTSD, and depression for most of his adult life. He admits he hasn't always made the best choices in life. More recently, considering the tragic murder of George Floyd, Scot has wondered if "that could have been me."

"Being recognized for doing good, not just about angling but also as a black man, father, role model and overall human...That's what that moment on that creek did. I'm healing mentally and emotionally, and the creek has helped me grow and value things in a way that I had never done before."

The film also contains some amazing footage of area trout streams, including a special spot that Scot has named "The Studio." Good luck trying to get him to tell you where to find it!

You can find the film on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/IL5pTWIy6J0>

Bob Luck



MICHAEL MELFORD WAS THE LUCKY WINNER OF THE STEVE SOBIENIAK BAMBOO ROD RAFFLE, BENEFITING HIAWATHA TU. HE IS PICTURED HERE WITH ROOT RIVER ROD CO. OWNER LANCE PRADO.

## Win-Cres Chapter

Win-Cres continues its collaboration with the Goodhue Fishing Club. The fishing club is a remarkable group of middle and high school students with a passion for fishing. They number about 100 strong, have their own apparel, and have nearly as many girls as boys. They are led by Robby Ebner, a teacher who grew up in Rushford.

Our first planned event, a skills day in Goodhue, was snowed out. The stars and weather aligned much better on April 28. 59 students met 15 guides in Rushford with good conditions. Under the direction of Mike Jerešek, they split up and spent the morning fishing Rush Creek, Pine Creek, and the South Fork of the Root River. Many of the students caught their first trout ever. They were eager to return the next week. Alas, school schedules and life crowded in.

Another major event for our chapter was spending a day with 22 Stihl employees clearing a stream corridor on Little Pickwick Creek. See Mark Reisetter's article on Page 12.

Several of our members have signed up to be stream monitors with the Izaak Walton League SOS initiative. They will be filling a significant gap in the Izaak's database on the Pine Creek/Rush Creek Watershed. This is a long term water quality monitoring project which has been helpful in identifying harmful impacts to water quality.

Our last event was pretty humble: picking up trash on Lake Boulevard, an annual event.

Looking ahead, we expect to be mowing trails on Garvin Brook and Rush Creek. We have a new brush saw to deploy and will find some unwanted willows, site to be determined. The effort to control Japanese knotweed on Garvin Brook will continue (see article on Page 18). We expect to engage the public at the Winona County Fair.

Chuck Shepard



THE GOODHUE FISHING CLUB IS COMPRISED OF AROUND 100 MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. THE WIN-CRES CHAPTER COLLABORATES WITH THE CLUB EACH YEAR.



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## SELECT POETRY

By Larry Gavin

### Firefly Pasture

There are always two choices,  
and it's no different standing on  
the bank this evening. I  
turn toward the light, a decision  
made without regard to deeper  
thought. There's the bright  
sunlight on riffles blinding  
me to the worries of the world.  
A kingfisher stands guard, silent  
as that moment before a summer  
storm. I strip line for a cast.  
Setting the world  
in motion, knowing little can go wrong,  
and preparing room for hope.

The stream sings to me  
of ivy and wild mint. The desire  
to stay connected to all that really  
matters in this world. This line  
becomes a symbol if I let it.  
Instead, I clear my mind of thought.  
I let the sun move toward the horizon,  
and catch the fade of daylight  
the gloaming coming down.  
One final brook trout, its side  
like the fireflies populating  
the pasture on the way back  
to the road. They blink, secure in their  
place here, like the light we chase  
for all our days.

*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](http://www.reddragonflypress.org)*

## Donate to MNTU!

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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968 Fairmount Ave, Saint Paul MN 55105



BOB LUCK, TCTU PRESIDENT, WITH A HEFTY BROWN FROM THE LITTLE CANNON RIVER. A HABITAT PROJECT IS BEING CONSIDERED ON A NEW AQUATIC MANAGEMENT AREA ON THE STREAM.