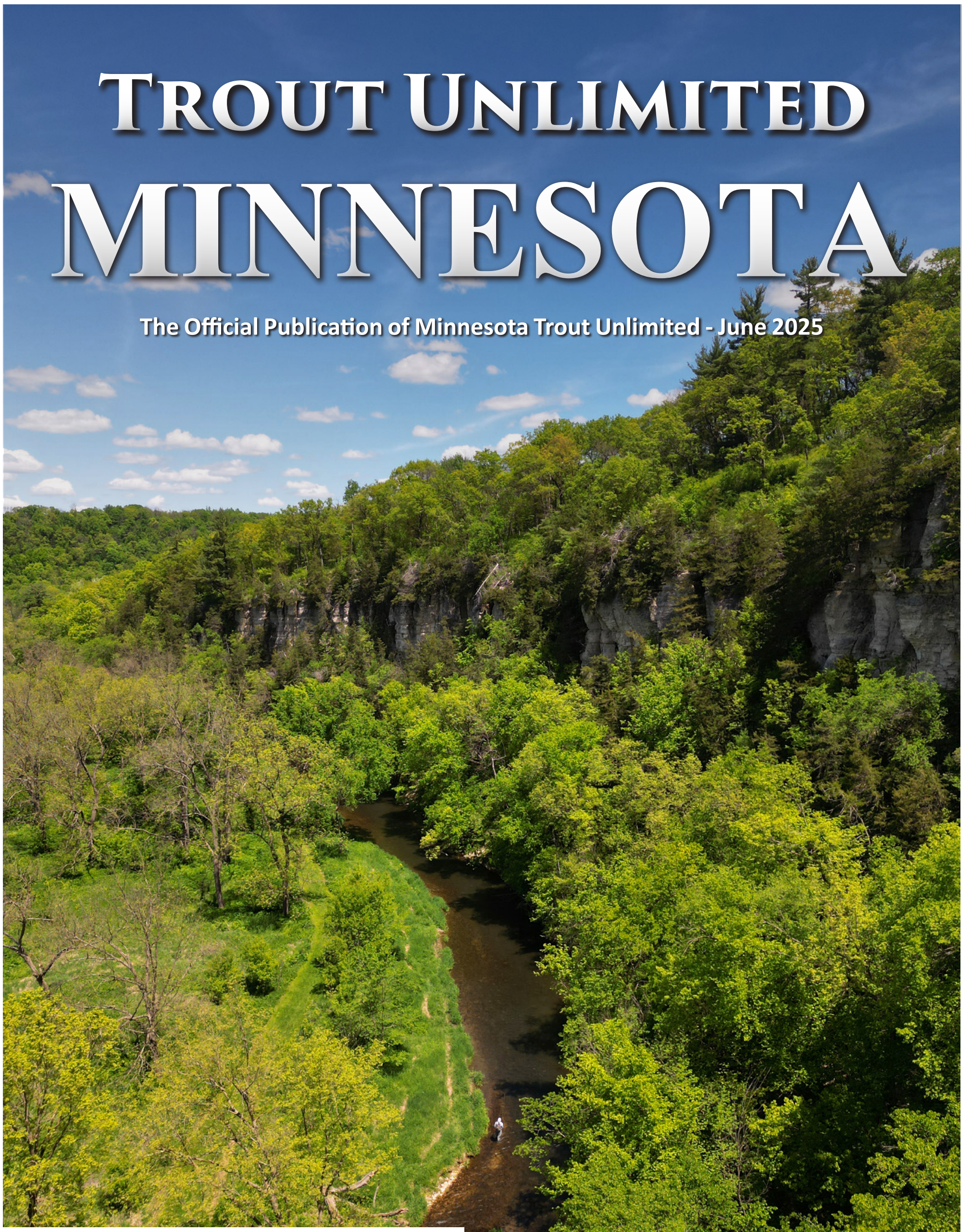


TROUT UNLIMITED MINNESOTA

The Official Publication of Minnesota Trout Unlimited - June 2025



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FISHING A GHOST TOWN

MNTU'S CEDAR VALLEY CREEK PROJECT

ARTIST PROFILE: PAUL JOHNSON

TYING THE THIN TIM

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EDITOR’S ANGLE
 TYING IN THE SPRINGTIME

By Jade Thomason, Editor

These days my fly tying falls exclusively into the "utility" category. There's a number of key patterns we've developed over the years and each winter our upstairs landing becomes a small factory for spring steelhead and brook trout flies. I look forward to some distant, slower time in my life where creativity in tying can return, but for now it must be practical. I'm proud to publish an article in this issue on Paul Johnson, one of the Midwest's great tyers. It's a continuation of Ben Nelson's "Artist Profile" series, though Paul prefers to be called a "craftsman."

Maybe your exposure to Paul Johnson has been through his regular fly tying feature in this newsletter. Or maybe you tie with him at the Laughing Trout Fly Tying Club. Some may not know that Paul has raised tens of thousands of dollars for MNTU and other conservation groups by donating stuffed boxes of perfect flies each year. The sheer number of

conversations and degree of fervor regarding the donated box at the Great Waters Expo is always entertaining. There's pinning, waxing poetic over tiny nymphs and dries, scheming and even repeated attempted bribery of the dedicated volunteers selling raffle tickets. Read more about Paul on Page 8. I was impressed, but not surprised, to hear that his tying space is immaculate and efficient. Let's just say I'm glad no one is stopping by to photograph my tying bench.

Another, new, Paul graces the pages of this publication. I also connected with Paul Connors at the expo this year, as he was a returning volunteer. Check out his essay on how he got started in fly fishing. It's entertaining, thoughtful and overall a great read. I hope we receive more articles from Paul in the future, I appreciate his perspective.

With a few newer writers in this issue, it's a good time to remind readers that



we are always open to new content and ideas. If you have an concept you'd like to see explored by someone else or a finished piece of your own, drop me a line. We're looking for trout fishing how-to, conservation and science issues, fishing reports and personal essays. This is Minnesota's only trout-centric publication, and we'd love to have you lend your voice.

STUDENTS ACROSS THE STATE SAMPLED AQUATIC MACROINVERTEBRATES WITH MNTU THIS SPRING.

ON THE COVER

The Palisades of the South Branch of the Root River. Jason Swingen photo.

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MARK REISSETTER RECEIVED THE 2025 DR. THOMAS WATERS AWARD FOR MINNESOTA CONSERVATION AT THIS YEAR'S GREAT WATERS FLY FISHING EXPO. CONGRATULATIONS, MARK!

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RESILIENCE

By John Lenczewski, MNTU Executive Director

A couple weeks ago several wildfires sprang up in northeast Minnesota and grew rapidly, causing evacuations of small communities and the destruction of many homes and cabins. I saw the plume of smoke from one fire in the distance when visiting one of MNTU's tree planting projects near Two Harbors, MN. All the motel rooms in town were full—occupied by the couple hundred firefighters rushed to the area to contain the blazes. News reports noted that the fires' rapid spread was due not just to the ongoing drought, but to the devastation caused by heavy infestations of spruce budworm. This native insect, kept in check by the normally cold and snowy winters Minnesota enjoyed for millennia, has exploded in the last decade as climate change has warmed our winters.

Broad swaths of North Shore stream corridors are now filled with dead and dying spruce and balsam fir, since these

two conifers make up a large percentage of the trees in riparian areas. The loss of shading is warming streams to levels where trout and steelhead have a hard time surviving. Unless fish can move to colder water or flee to Lake Superior they perish. For several years MNTU has been pursuing two key strategies to sustain and bolster trout and steelhead populations: restoring riparian canopy by clearing areas of dead balsam and spruce and planting a mix of long-lived trees, and removing barriers preventing brook trout from reaching coldwater refuge areas.

In the past few years we have worked with partners to give brook trout access to nearly twenty miles of habitat in the Baptism and Manitou River watersheds. A recently released report of a brook trout movement study in the Baptism River showed that our faith in the resilience of wild trout is well placed. Researchers found that, once barrier cul-



verts were removed, some brook trout traveled several miles in a single day!

As we continue advocacy to protect watersheds that support trout, our work reconnecting and restoring habitat gives these resilient fish the boost they need to survive and thrive in a changing world.



MINNESOTA COUNCIL UPDATE

THE FLUCTUATIONS OF WATER

By Brent Notbohm, Minnesota Council of TU Chair

Sometimes I feel like a broken record, but when you witness the same thing happening over and over again, it's difficult not to repeat yourself. A week ago, I fished a favorite Lake Superior tributary for steelhead and it was an unseasonably warm 70 degrees. Yesterday, May 20, I fished the same river and it was a balmy 38 degrees and snowing. I keep a journal of my fishing adventures on the North Shore that dates back many years and the weather was rarely this chaotic in the past. Now every spring the weather fluctuates like a warped 45 on my dad's old record player from Sears!

If you have a favorite body of water that you've fished for years, then you've probably seen the effects of climate change too. Is the water flow frequently much lower or higher than you ever remember? Or has it been unseasonably too hot or too cold to fish at a time that used to be ideal? Perhaps you've seen a decline in the hatches on your favorite trout stream or flooding has permanently damaged your secret fishing hole and it just doesn't hold the fish like it used to. I'll say it again, even if it's the same old tune: the climate is changing!

As long as I'm repeating myself, I must again express my concern over reports that the federal government is planning to lease or even sell off portions of public lands, our lands, for private exploitation. I'm not a wealthy person, so I rely on public access, such as the federally owned Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, to enjoy fishing and the outdoors. Public lands and public access are essential for many of us to recreate and enjoy our lives!

Okay, I'll change my tune to a more upbeat song. The work of Minnesota Trout Unlimited continues to move forward! At our April Board of Directors meeting, we passed a budget to fund our Trout in the Classroom education program for another school year, despite the lapse in state funding this June. The Board recognizes the importance of this program to our members, to educators and schools across Minnesota, and especially to those kids who participate in the program. For some children, it's their very first experience with trout and a trout stream! I wish to personally express my gratitude to each TU chapter in Minnesota for contributing funds to this cause for the 2025-26 school year. Long term, MNTU continues to actively pur-



sue funding options for this program, including state grants and private foundations. This brings me to play a final record—one that you've also heard from me before if you read this column. I'm thankful to be a member of an organization that cares about the issues I care about: curbing the causes of climate change, protecting public lands and fishing access, restoring habitat for fish, advocating for clean water and a better environment, and teaching young people about the joys of our natural resources. Thanks for all each of you do to make this organization sing! Important songs are always worth listening to again and again!



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THE CEDAR VALLEY CREEK HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

A GEM IN WINONA COUNTY

By Jennifer Biederman, PhD, MNTU Habitat Program Director



LEFT: STEEP, ACTIVELY ERODING BANKS ON CEDAR VALLEY CREEK, PRIOR TO HABITAT IMPROVEMENT (APRIL 2023).



RIGHT: SAME REACH IN SEPTEMBER 2023 FOLLOWING THE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT. THE HIGH BANKS WERE SLOPED TO RECONNECT THE FLOODPLAIN AND ROOTWADS WERE PLACED ALONG THE OUTSIDE BEND TO PROVIDE BANK STABILITY AND FISH HABITAT.

There is no shortage of reasons to take a road trip to Winona this summer—music festivals, arts and theater events, boundless opportunities to enjoy the outdoors—fishing, biking, boating, birding, kayaking, to name a few. When you go, be sure to pack along your favorite 4wt fly rod, head down river, and check out MNTU’s recent habitat improvement project on Cedar Valley Creek—a scenic 15-minute drive south-east of Winona.

Cedar Valley Creek has a small watershed with a drainage area that just exceeds 7 square miles. The landscape is dotted with small pastures, hayfields, pockets of hardwood forest, and, although there is an increasing number of residential homes along the lower reaches, the entire valley feels pastoral and off the beaten path. There have been a number of habitat improvement projects on Cedar Valley Creek over the decades, including those by MNTU and the DNR. The most recent project, constructed in August of 2023, tackled a 4,675-ft reach (see map) starting from Cedar Valley Lutheran Church.

Tackling Tough Challenges: Steep Banks and Lack of Fish Habitat

The Cedar Valley Creek watershed faces many challenges typical of southeast Minnesota streams – much of the stream is incised, trapped in steep, eroding banks of legacy soils due to poor agricultural practices more than a century ago. Other sections have become overly wide, with slow moving water allowing sand and silt to fall out and smother critical coarse gravel and cobble needed for both trout spawning and the production of macroinvertebrate food. The stream’s proximity to Winona, La Crescent, and La Crosse, along with the thermal potential to support native brook trout (it’s cold!), made it a priority for MNTU and the Minnesota DNR

to pursue additional restoration. In 2017, MNTU was awarded an Outdoor Heritage Fund grant to fund the work, and in 2021, a competitive bid process awarded the project design to Emmons and Olivier Resources, Inc (EOR). Over the next year and half, the EOR project team worked with MNTU, the local Win-Cres TU chapter, the Lanesboro DNR, and the landowner to design a full-scale habitat improvement project that would tackle the stream’s most critical challenges, including lack of floodplain connectivity, bank erosion, invasive vegetation, and lack of trout habitat. When all the planning and permitting was complete, construction was competitively bid and awarded to Barth Construction. Shovels hit the ground in August of 2023, and construction lasted about four weeks.

Maintenance will continue through 2026.

One of the most critical goals of the project was to reconnect the incised channel with its floodplain while reducing the amount of bank erosion along the project reach. To achieve this, the design called for extensive bank grading and sloping (see pre-project photo), allowing for water to spill out into the floodplain during bankful events—which is crucial for dissipating the high energy of fast, flowing water following heavy rain events.

In addition, the project sought to restore crucial habitat to support the full life history of a native stream-dwelling trout—including riffles for spawning and food production, slow backwater channels for young-of-the-year, and large pools and

overhead cover (pool logs, large boulders, and rootwads) to support adults.

Outside the stream, the project also uplifted the ecological value of the terrestrial corridor—replacing invasive species including wild parsnip, garlic mustard, buckthorn, honeysuckle, and black locust with native grasses, sedges, flowers, shrubs, and trees to support nongame wildlife, including insects, birds, herpetofauna, and mammals. In fact, this part of the project takes three-years—so if you visit Cedar Valley Creek this spring, summer, or fall, you may see a contractor or two doing vegetation maintenance work, such as re-treating any regrowth of invasives and spot seeding the native mix.

CEDAR VALLEY CREEK BY THE NUMBERS

- 4,675 feet of stream restored
- 7,900 cubic yards of soil removed from the banks
- 136,000lbs of bank soil erosion prevented (almost 10 dump truck loads!)
- 270 feet of toewood and 22 rootwads installed to stabilize banks and provide fish habitat
- 6 pool logs to provide overhead cover
- 70lbs of native seed sowed on the banks
- 81 native trees and shrubs planted
- 3,500 Minnesota Driftless strain brook trout stocked by MN DNR



WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SAMPLED AN ADULT BROWN TROUT DURING AN ELECTROFISHING SURVEY FOLLOWING THE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (PHOTO: NEAL MUNDAHL).

How did the project impact the aquatic community?

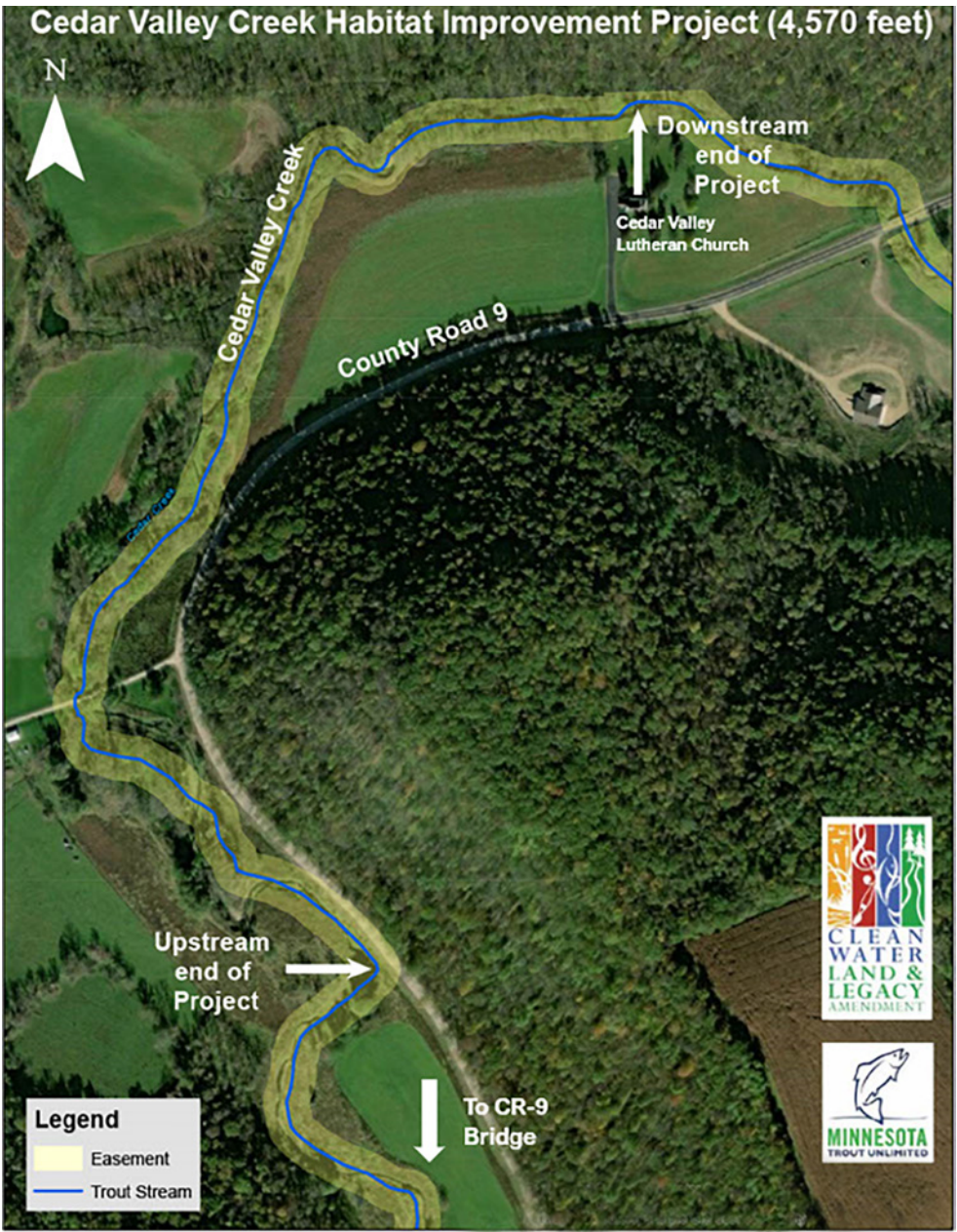
MNTU is thankful to receive generous funding from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund to support efforts like the stream improvement project at Cedar Valley Creek, however, these funds cannot be used to do monitoring before or after the project. MNTU was lucky to have a local aquatic ecology professor (and longtime Win-Cres TU member) Dr. Neal Mundahl from Winona State University sample the reach before and after the project to evaluate how fish may have responded to the new habitat. According to Mundahl: “Cedar Valley Creek has really changed! Both the stream habitat and the fish sizes/numbers really differed before/after the project. Some sections that previously had a mix of trout sizes/ages became dominated by adults after habitat additions (rootwads, especially—so many fish!). One section that had a mix of trout sizes pre-project became solely a nursery habitat (shallow, rocky, mix of fast and slow water)—no larger fish at all. All five of the random sections that we surveyed had more fish post- compared to pre-project.”

We were also fortunate to have local community scientists carry out Save Our Streams water quality monitoring on the creek following the project construction. This protocol involves measuring an array of water quality metrics (nitrates,

phosphates, dissolved oxygen, temperature, etc.) and sampling the aquatic macroinvertebrate community to infer the health of the stream. Just over one month following project construction, the group sampled macroinvertebrates in the most downstream riffle within the project area. They were excited to report that both the diversity and abundance of aquatic macroinvertebrate species were among the best they had measured in the area—with several different types of mayflies and caddisflies present, along with scuds, midges, craneflies, and snails.

Ready to fish?

Put Cedar Valley on your list to fish this spring and summer. The best way to access fishing at the project is from the County Road (CR) 9 bridges just above and below the completed project (see map). Anglers should note that the driveway located in the upper-middle section of the project is not within the easement and should not be used for parking or to access the road for walking. To fish from the CR 9 bridge upstream down to the driveway is about 2,800 feet, so there is just over one mile of commitment to walk the stream round trip. To fish upstream from bridge to bridge and walk the road back would be 6,400 feet of stream plus 5,400 feet of road for a total of 11,800 feet (just over 2 miles). Parking is permitted at Cedar Valley Lutheran Church.



DECAL HELPS ANGLERS IDENTIFY, SAVE STEELHEAD
MINNESOTA SEA GRANT OFFERS FREE DECALS FOR SECOND YEAR
By Marie Thoms and Don Schreiner

As spring fishing ramps up on Lake Superior, anglers are hitting the water in pursuit of steelhead, lake trout, coho and chinook salmon. To help protect wild steelhead Minnesota Sea Grant (MNSG) is distributing free identification decals for a second year to help anglers distinguish between steelhead and other salmon species while they’re out on the water.

Minnesota fishing regulations require that all wild steelhead must be released. These are naturally reproducing fish and are protected by a catch-and-release rule. The decals are free but recipients are asked to complete a five-minute survey at the end of the angling season. The survey provides information on the effectiveness of the decal and helps MNSG determine if there’s interest in similar identification tools for other Lake Superior fish.

Learn more about MNSG’s “Steelhead or Salmon? Which Did You Catch” project at z.umn.edu/MNSG-Steelhead-Salmon. If you or someone you know fishes in Lake Superior or its tributary streams and would like a steelhead identification decal, you can request one by emailing Don Schreiner at schr0941@d.umn.edu

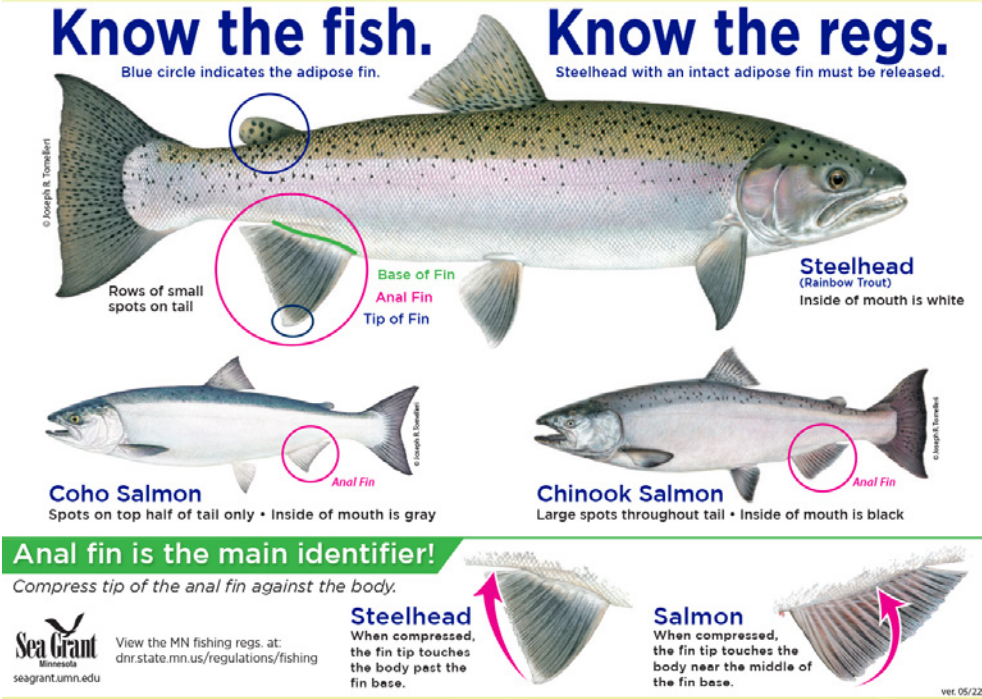
Wild steelhead can be identified by their intact adipose fin—the small, fleshy fin located on the fish's back. Hatchery-raised steelhead have a clipped (miss-

ing) adipose fin and may be harvested, with a daily limit of three fish over 16 inches.

In 2024, Minnesota Sea Grant surveyed 75 of the 150 or so anglers who requested a steelhead identification decal. Half of the respondents said they used the decal to identify the fish they caught. Most importantly, 19% of those who said they caught a wild steelhead also said they would have mistakenly kept the fish if they had not used the identification decal.

“We’re pleased to see anglers using the steelhead identification decals,” said Minnesota Sea Grant Fisheries Specialist Don Schreiner. “Protecting wild steelhead from harvest allows these fish to spawn, which helps increase the steelhead population.”

When asked where they fished, 67% of the decal users reported fishing on Lake Superior by boat, 37% in tributary streams, and 27% from shore, with a few anglers fishing at multiple locations. When asked about decal placement, 40% of anglers affixed it to their boat, another 40% to their tackle box, and 12% to a cooler. The remaining 8% of respondents indicated that they had not attached the decal. Additionally, 76% of respondents said that others were interested in the decal and learned from it. More than 80% of respondents also expressed interest in receiving identification decals for fish



A COLLABORATION WITH MNTU, THIS EDUCATIONAL DECAL HAS HELPED SAVE WILD STEELHEAD FROM MISIDENTIFICATION

of other species.

“We thank everyone who participated in our survey and shared their experiences,” said Schreiner. “We anticipate conducting another survey of decal recipients in late 2025.”

Additional Information

Minnesota Sea Grant is a system-wide program of the University of Minnesota and one of 34 federal-university Sea Grant partnerships across the country supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Great Lakes and coastal states that encour-

age the wise stewardship of our marine resources through research, outreach, communication, education and technology transfer.

Don Schreiner, Fisheries Specialist, Minnesota Sea Grant, University of Minnesota and University of Minnesota Duluth, schr0941@d.umn.edu

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FISHING A GHOST TOWN

TESTING RUSH CREEK’S RECOVERY AFTER 2022 FISH KILL

By Barry Johnson

I was fishing through a ghost town. And maybe fishing in a ghost trout stream.

The ghost town was Enterprise, Minnesota, in Winona County. The stream was Rush Creek, site of a nasty fish kill in 2022. A few months ago, I spent a day fishing Rush. I fished the area the locals still call Enterprise, even though that little town has long since disappeared. I was hoping the same wasn’t true of trout in the stretch of water where all those fish went belly up three years ago.

A Streamside Boom Town

Enterprise appeared on the map in the pioneer year of 1853. It was a boom time in the region. Population in the Minnesota Territory exploded from 6,000 in 1850 to 150,000 in 1857. We became a state in 1858

Some of those newcomers settled in Enterprise. In the prime of its short life from the mid-1850s to the mid-’60s, a few hundred people lived there, right along the banks of Rush Creek. The new town of about 60 families boasted a hotel, post office, tavern, blacksmith shop and store. Enterprise also featured a distillery. Whiskey sold for 25 cents a gallon. The favorite local drink, described as “a devilish concoction,” was a highball made with four fingers of whiskey and “about a spoonful” of cold trout-spring water. A small factory turned out matches for sale to the many cigar smokers of the day.

Enterprise withered and died in the 1870s. The railroad—the lifeblood of any pioneer town—bypassed it and came through nearby Lewiston instead. Today, Enterprise is 100% gone. Mostly, it serves as pasture land. Some sections are “set aside,” voluntarily withdrawn from crop production (Conservation Reserve Program). Floods have scoured the area. Not even a stone foundation is left of Enterprise.

But Rush Creek still flows through Enterprise Valley.

A Fish Kill

Rush Creek is about half an hour east of Rochester. It rolls southward some 20 miles to Rushford, where it connects with the Root River. Rush has always had good natural reproduction of brown trout, according the Department of Natural Resources Fisheries office in Lanesboro.

But a section of Rush Creek died in July, 2022. A brief storm dropped about two inches of rain onto local farm fields in just a few hours. The deluge shot-gunned surface runoff into the summer-stressed, slow-moving Rush Creek. A few days later, the dead fish were discovered. Four Minnesota state agencies concluded an “unknown contaminant” overwhelmed the stream. Manure? A fungicide or herbicide? Something else? Officially, no cause was determined. An estimated 2,500 fish were killed. Most were brown trout. White sucker and mottled sculpin also washed ashore.



RUSH CREEK IS A STUNNING STREAM IN WINONA COUNTY. IT WAS MARRIED IN THE SUMMER OF 2022 BY A DEVASTATING FISH KILL EVENT.

The dead trout were strewn along a two-mile section of the creek. The primary kill zone ran from the County Road 29 bridge downstream to beyond the Interstate 90 bridge.

By the time state officials visited, definitive evidence of what caused the kill was far downstream. Many fish carcasses had floated away or been eaten by scavengers. A few hundred decomposing dead brown trout were still visible along the stream. Most were six- to 10-inches long. Some were big and husky, 16- to 20-inchers. Among the poisoned fish was a massive, trophy-sized 27-inch brown trout, probably five pounds or more. It likely took five to eight years for that beast of a trout to grow so large.

Recovery Time

Rush Creek is constantly refreshed with cold spring water. Its water chemistry returned to normal shortly after the kill. The multi-state-agency report about the event indicated that trout food in the stream, macroinvertebrate nymphs and larval insects, did not seem to be hugely affected by whatever killed the fish. (That pointed to manure vs. powerful

fungicides or herbicides, which can be highly toxic to macroinvertebrates.)

So, now there was healthy water and an adequate supply of nutrients, but a two-mile stretch of presumably fishless creek. There were no electro-shock fish surveys done on Rush before or after the kill. No trout-per-mile data exists for then-vs.-now comparisons. The nearby Whitewater River holds a few hundred trout per mile (depending on which river branch) according to the DNR. A fully recovered Rush should be comparable.

The area of the Rush Creek kill has never been stocked. There was no need. Browns were doing just fine there. So, no stocking was done after the fish kill. Dumping a thousand brown trout fingerlings into the stream could cause slow growth issues, the DNR told me. Based on that, and the healthy trout reproduction, the belief was that Rush Creek would fully recover on its own in two to three years.

Fish Kill Response

Prior to 2022, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture took a step to help farmers

manage the risk of field runoff. Working with the National Weather Service, they introduced an online tool called Minnesota Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast (RRAF). It was launched in 2019.

The tool can be localized to a farmer’s actual field. It combines data from multiple sources to assess how much moisture the soil is already holding and the local forecast for rain. It then serves up the risk of field runoff for that day and the next few days. It lets farmers know if no runoff is expected, or if the risk is low, moderate, or severe. On July 23, 2022, the tool showed a moderate runoff risk in the Rush Creek watershed. The actual rainfall that day was much worse than forecast.

Following the Rush Creek kill, the Minnesota Pollution Control agency (MPCA), Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture and Department of Health jointly developed an “Interagency Fish Kill Response” to better coordinate their activities. The MPCA followed up with a communications campaign to raise awareness of kills and how to report them. The cam-



THE AUTHOR FISHES THE STRETCH OF RUSH CREEK AFFECTED IN 2022. QUALITY BROWN TROUT WERE SEEN FINNING IN THE CLEAR WATERS. JOHN WEISS PHOTO.

paign included mailers sent to about 15,000 landowners in the region. Radio and online public service announcements were also deployed.

One Day’s Experience

I fished Rush Creek in mid-April, about two and a half years after the fish kill. The weather was variable, changing from a cool, cloudy morning to sprinkles, then a noon downpour. After the rain, it was a Grade A spring day in the Driftless. Blue sky, warm sun, cool April air.

My day started at the County Road 29 bridge over Rush, ground zero of the 2022 fish kill. For the record, it should be stated that this was my first time fishing in months. I was rusty. My new leader would not uncurl properly. Line snarls happened. The stream was low and clear as tapwater. There are other excuses I can ladle on but the short version is that I was skunked on this part of the stream. A trio of fly casters came humping toward me from the other direction. One of them said, “I had one very light strike... I think.” (Remember, you can’t believe every big brag that comes out of a trout angler’s mouth.) In my limited experience, if you like catching burrs on your boots instead of trout on your line, this is a good section of stream for you.

Later that day, after the rain, I tried the Rush farther downstream, near the I-90 bridge. That bridge is a colossus, seven stories tall, built from 1969 to 1972. It spans Enterprise Valley, site of the long-gone town. Old maps show the location of various structures along the stream, but time and floods and nature have cleared the valley.

There are some fishy runs, riffles and pools in this area. Not far downstream from the bridge, I spotted trout, greedily feeding and flashing. The water was still shallow and the fish spooky. Finally, a small caddis did the trick on a nice 10-inch brown, maybe 11 if you squinted. Further along the creek, I saw more active trout, but none took my fly. Soft-

hackle, pheasant tail, another caddis, nothing worked.

Local farmers I spoke with said anglers were having luck around Enterprise Valley. They had not heard how the fishing was upstream around County Road 29. Maybe the trout have recovered there, but were just not active that morning. Maybe they are still moving back into the area. But I can say for a fact there are nice brown trout in the lower area of the 2022 trout kill.

Even if Rush Creek has recovered like a champ, it might take another three to five years (2028 – 2030) for the rare chance of hooking a monstrous 27-inch brown trout, like the five-pounder that washed up dead three years ago.

Manure Management

In a 2024 report to the Minnesota Legislature titled “Preventing fish kills in

Minnesota’s driftless region,” the very first recommendation of the MPCA dealt with manure pits.

Manure management is probably not part of your job (literally, anyway). But it’s part of the farming life. Farmers build pits to store cow manure until it can be applied to fields as fertilizer. The big, well-run feedlots can store nine months to a year or more of manure. Smaller farms may not have that capacity, or might not have a manure pit at all.

The MPCA suggested increasing financial support for farmers to build, repair or expand pits. Adequate manure storage makes it easier for farmers to apply manure properly—at the right time under the right weather conditions. Hard rain in the forecast? Hold off spreading manure and keep it in the pit.

It’s a costly proposition. Small dairy

farmers might make about \$50,000 in a year. Some years they operate at a loss. Building a manure pit for 100 cows can easily cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. The MPCA estimated it would take about \$50 million to support manure pit work across southeastern Minnesota, an area beset with nitrate contamination of groundwater.

During the 2024 legislative session Minnesota TU worked with several partners and legislators on bills to create a manure management grant program for smaller feedlots. This included briefing various lawmakers and testifying in key legislative committees. In the end, the Legislature appropriated \$850,000 to get this grant program started, far less funding than MNTU had lobbied for.

B.J. Johnson is a freelance writer living in Eagan, Minnesota.



"IN MY LIMITED EXPERIENCE, IF YOU LIKE CATCHING BURRS ON YOUR BOOTS INSTEAD OF TROUT ON YOUR LINE, THIS IS A GOOD SECTION OF STREAM FOR YOU." JOHN WEISS PHOTO.

PAUL JOHNSON

AN ARTIST (CRAFTSMAN) PROFILE

By Ben Nelson • Photos by Hal Tearse

Let's call Paul Johnson a craftsman. You may recognize Paul from his tying demonstrations at fly fishing shows. Maybe you've watched his tutorials on YouTube. You might have clipped one of his fly recipes from this newsletter. If you're lucky you've won a box of museum-quality flies that Paul donates to Trout Unlimited. Paul Johnson ties flies with flawless precision and consistency. His flies are immaculate. They're beautiful. But are they art? Is Paul Johnson an artist? "I have no musical ability," he says. "I cannot draw. I couldn't paint a picture for my life. My daughter Sarah is a high school art teacher. She says, 'Well Dad, until you create something new, it's not an art. It's a craft.'"

"I'll take a fly that someone else did and say that's really nice but I'd do this, this, and this," Paul says. "So I'm always tinkering things and changing things. I've never analyzed a bug and said I'm going to try to imitate this because this looks like the bug I saw. I've never done that. I've taken a pattern that someone else has created and modified it, if you will. Even in my political career, the best ideas I've had I've borrowed from somebody else."

Johnson looks too young to be retired. He has a runner's build (he's run at least two miles everyday since January 1, 1999, no exceptions). He wears thin glasses, short hair, a light beard, jeans and a simple sweatshirt. He's modest, confident, and concise. His mornings begin by brewing a cup of coffee, grabbing the newspaper and walking downstairs to his fly tying room. "I took the old storage room in the back corner of the basement and converted it into my fly tying room. The joke was that this was the nicest room in the house," he says. "When we were remodeling and the rest of the house was torn apart, the joke wasn't quite as funny."

The tying room has hardwood flooring and wood paneled walls. Boat-shaped shelves hold framed photos and fish sculptures. A tanned badger hide hangs on a nail, a muskrat pelt on another. Vases are filled with turkey and pheasant feathers. He's surrounded by fishing gear, tying tools, and pieces of his history.

Johnson sits at the centerpiece of the room, an antique rolltop desk. Its inner compartments are neatly lined with boxes of hooks and beads. Capes and hides fill its drawers. Magnets on the desktop hold a handful of hooks. His workspace, and the entire tying room for that matter, are organized and tidy. There is not a stray moose hair or a loose peacock plume. The air smells of efficiency. "I did not clean. The only materials I have on my desk are for the pattern that I'm tying at that time. So everything else is put away. You drop a box of tungsten beads and you'll be crawling around for weeks." Johnson's terrified by the thought of size 22 hooks in the carpet. He hasn't done it, but



PAUL JOHNSON SITS IN HIS COMFORTABLE CHAIR IN HIS FLY TYING ROOM. THE WALLS ARE ADORNED WITH PELTS, FEATHERS AND FISHING MEMENTOS FROM OVER THE YEARS.

a friend has. "I've already got eight hooks with beads on them. I've cut my wire. I've got my goose biot for the wings. Everything is laid out ready to go. That's the beauty of having my own fly tying room."

Johnson has been tying flies for about 20 years. He leans back in his chair and remembers his start, being bit by the bug. It was the mid-'90s. He was working full-time in corporate lending, serving one of his three terms as the mayor of Waconia, and with his wife Renae, raising two preschool-aged daughters. His schedule was full and his days were long. Under pressure from every angle, Paul walked into the old Gander Mountain store in Minnetonka. "There was this group of guys setting up tables and they were going to tie flies," Paul recalls. "I knew what they were doing but I had never seen it." They smiled and joked as they assembled vises and arranged materials. Johnson was struck with jealousy. "These guys are having more fun than I am." Paul didn't buy a vise or a bobbin that day. He staggered through the store and kept grinding through his career. But the moment stayed with him. "It just stuck, you know."

Paul points to a framed watercolor on the tying room wall. Sarah painted it. A northern Minnesota lakeside cabin is framed by pine trees before a dock in the water. The Johnsons spend summers there. Paul discovered that the panfish off the dock could be taken with a fly. "The kids gave me a Cabela's fly tying kit for Christmas one year," he says. "Cheap vise, video tape, the book and the whole bit. Those first flies you tie are just God-awful." You crowd the eye, you overload the dubbing. "Throw it away and start over." Johnson followed instructions from books, studied diagrams, and took tying classes at

Bentley's Outfitters. In 2008 he joined the Laughing Trout Fly Tying Club. He began tying with them on Wednesday nights at the American Legion in Wayzata. After years of repetition, persistence, and meticulous attention to detail, Paul's flies have become renowned. His videos are a tyer's textbook. He's a leader in the Laughing Trout Tying Club and the greater fly tying community as well. "My advantage was that I worked here in town, nine blocks from home. My commute time was half a song on the radio. When I was working, people would ask 'How do you have time to tie flies?' and I would say, 'Well you spend 45 minutes in your car every morning. I spend two.'"

In the corner of the tying room is a rod rack. It holds about a dozen fly rods. "My oldest daughter Holly says we don't have too many fly rods, we have

a fly rod storage problem." Paul points to a framed photograph of Holly. She's kneeling in a mountain stream, holding a beautiful rainbow trout. "She's the real fisherman, very skilled fisherman. She may love it more than I do." Paul and Holly fish together in the Driftless region and have traveled west together. "To go to Yellowstone with your 29 year-old daughter is a special thing. 'Dad, take me fishing this weekend.' It's just priceless."

Next to the rod rack is a chest of drawers with a smaller cabinet on top of it. Johnson's eyes widen and he speaks a little bit faster as he begins to open and close their drawers. "Spools of 8/0 thread, drawer of 6/0 thread, brassy size wire, small wire, different size wire." He closes a drawer and opens another. "Puglisi fibers, stretchy floss, different colors." Another drawer opens and closes.



THERE WAS NO NEED FOR PAUL TO CLEAN UP FOR THE PHOTOSHOOT, HE KEEPS HIS DESK TIDY AND EFFICIENT.

es. “Zelon, chenille, yarns, rubber legs.” He keeps opening and closing. “This is all hackle, different feathers, soft hackles, hen hackles, necks, capes, hair, da da da da da.” The drawers are both stuffed full and organized. “Elk hair, deer hair, different flash, materials, cdc, peacock, da da da, hooks, tools, dubbing, more dry fly hackle, caribou.”

Johnson pauses, “This is a good time to bring this up. I’ve learned something, and it’s getting worse. And that is hoarding. If you find a material that you like, buy all of it that you can buy.” He opens another drawer, this one bulging with purple material. “If you’re going to buy, you just buy it all. I’ll never tie this many in my life but by gosh I’m not going to run out.”

Adjacent to the tying desk, above a leather chair, hangs a wide frame landscape photograph. Johnson is in the foreground, on the bank, holding a trophy cutthroat. There is not another angler in the panorama. “Fishing, I seek solitude. I say that I like about six people in the world and I tolerate a few more.” Later on, Paul corrects himself. He forgot about his wife. Make it seven. “I don’t fish the Kinni or the Rush anymore. If there’s a car I’m going to keep going. My goal is to not see anyone fishing all day long.” Paul hikes 15 miles a day in Yellowstone. “Running is to do that and that,” he says as he points to framed photos. “To find that solitude. To keep up with Holly. To fish all day.” Johnson smiles. “That’s what is really cool about fly fishing, I have half a dozen fish that I could tell you everything about catching that fish: where I was, what fly I used, what time of day it was, how the fish came up and ate the fly. Some of those things are so ingrained. I don’t remember what I did yesterday but I remember catching that fish.”

So was it the Firehole, the Lamar, or Slough Creek? Mum’s the word. “I’ll never say where I fish. I just won’t. I will share flies and fly tying.”

“When I do a demonstration or a seminar,” Paul says, “I always ask the group, ‘Have you ever been outsmarted by a fish?’ Oh yeah, yeah! ‘Well that’s too bad because a fish has a brain about that

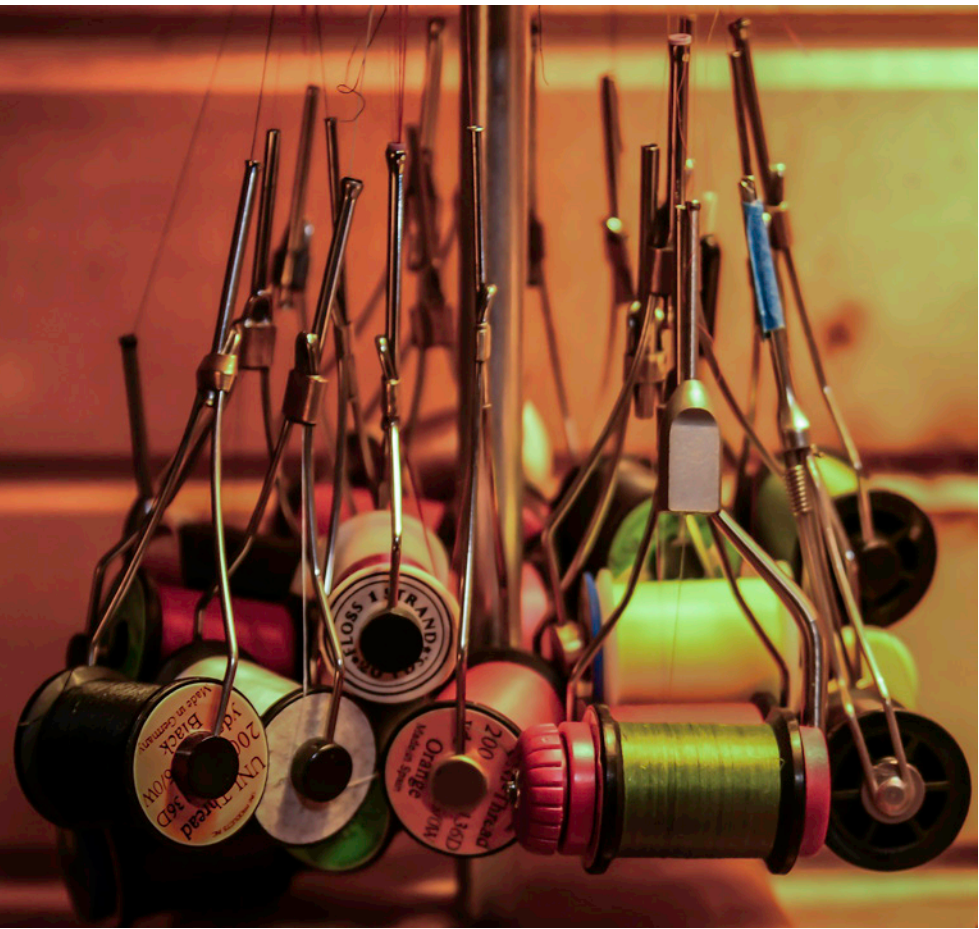
big.’” Paul holds his thumb and index finger an inch apart. “Fish, they’re not that smart. Big fish get big because they are scared. They are the ones that run and hide at any potential sign of danger. Present a fly with no drag, reasonable size, profile, color. But, you know, they’re not that fussy. I try to tie good-looking flies that suit my eye.”

Today, Johnson is tying his Purple Prince Charming. “I always like fishing prince nymphs,” Paul says. “I saw this Prince Charming fly in Fly Tyer Magazine.” Johnson swapped the marabou tail for shuck material, turned the body purple, and ditched some dubbing. With that, he created the Purple Prince Charming. It’s become a favorite fly. “So I started tying them and I started fishing them. Every time we use it, it catches fish. The fly, with that tungsten bead sinks well. It works really well floated under a hopper or an indicator. What I think makes a really big difference is the rooster hackle collar. If you see it in the water it traps air bubbles as it’s drifting down the river. I think that’s one thing that the fish will key in on.”

Paul begins his demonstration by offering beginners a piece of financial advice. “I ask them if they’re married or have a significant other.” The learners nod. “Then the first thing you have to do is get a credit card that your partner doesn’t know about.”

Johnson turns his chair squaring himself to the desk. He switches on two flexible lamps, both bent to focus on his vise. “For me, lighting is everything. I want a white base, white background, as much light as I can get on my tying.” He looks over his shoulder. “As you get older you may find that to be beneficial.”

Johnson picks a hook off the magnet and locks it between the jaws of the vise. “I already have the bead on the hook. I tie this with a size 14 scud hook and a 2.8 millimeter tungsten bead.” Paul selects a bobbin from a rack of thirty. “I don’t like to change thread. My tools are top of the line. They are expensive, but you take care of them. They’re going to last me a lifetime. My biggest worry is that when I die my wife is going to sell all of this for what I told her I paid for it.”



"I DON'T LIKE TO CHANGE THREAD," PAUL SAYS.

The bobbin is loaded with 8/0 purple Uni-thread. “Get that started right behind the bead.” He turns the bobbin over the shank, securing the thread against itself. “Cut the excess off. Tie in a length of shuck material.” Johnson suggests mayfly brown Zelon. “All of this stuff was designed as carpet material. So if you have Berber carpet in your house, it’s the same stuff. Just go in the living room and clip a little off.”

“The ribbing is gold wire, size brassy,” Paul says. “I’ll tie that in on my side of the hook. Trying to keep it smooth with no lumps or bumps.”

Johnson likes a soft material for the body and thorax. He uses purple stretchy floss. “Here’s my theory on this stuff: get yourself a piece of Christmas candy, like a Hershey’s kiss. If there’s a little bit of tin foil wrapper left, and you bite into it, you know immediately. My same theory goes for the fish.”

Paul throws a half-hitch, cradles the bobbin, and using the rotary function, wraps the floss forward. He secures the floss then counter-wraps the wire ribbing.

Next, he ties in the wings, two goose biots crossing each other at a 45 degree angle. The top biot is always pointed toward himself.

“The key to this fly is I use good dry fly hackle,” Paul says. “What do you know about chickens? You had chicken nuggets last night from McDonald’s. That chicken was 90 days old. The hackle roosters get to be 18 months old to grow the nice hackle, long, straight feathers with the barbs that stand up stiff. These chickens are old, they’re bred for their feathers.” That makes these feathers expensive. But it gets worse. “Steven Tyler from Aerosmith was on American Idol. He had rooster hackle in his hair! The next week beauty shops bought every gall-darn feather that there was! The price went way up!” Paul waves his hand in the air. “It’s never come back down. So I blame him.” Paul makes three full wraps with the hook size 16 and grizzly hackle. To complete the fly, Johnson catches his thread with a whip-finisher and makes five passes around the base of the bead. He brings his scissor to the thread, makes a snip, and he’s done. Another masterpiece ready for the fly box.

“Working in a bank, at the end of the day, we did something. We worked hard, met with people, made loans, whatever, but you never saw the end result. You make a loan, then they need to make payments for thirty years. It’s never really done. There’s a beginning but there’s not always an end. If you build something you can see your progress at the end of the day. In fly tying there’s a beginning and an end. There is a sense of accomplishment, of completing something. I can see what I did today and can feel good about that.”

Ben Nelson is a physician in Duluth. He lives there with his wife and three children.

Find more of Hal Tearse's photography at: www.tearsephotography.com



PAUL CAREFULLY SELECTS FEATHERS FOR "THE WHISTLER," ONE OF HIS FAVORITE BASS FLIES.

TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM RELEASE DAY

"WE OPEN UP THOSE WORLDS TO KIDS."

By John Weiss

On May 22, Rushford-Peterson Schools sophomores carried about 10 buckets of cold water filled with about 200 rainbow trout fingerlings from their biology classroom to release them into nearby Rush Creek.

It was the beginning of the fingerlings' new life in a stream where they will have to learn to fend for themselves instead of getting daily food handouts. It was the end of a several-months Trout in the Classroom experience, sponsored by Minnesota Trout Unlimited, that would lead the 62 sophomores into the world of trout and trout streams, giving them a hands-on experience seeing just what it takes to rear trout from eggs to fingerlings. They would sample water and measure fish nearly daily in Jacob Kramer's biology classroom. Some are trout anglers, some aren't but all got that lesson in Trout Rearing 101.

Besides releasing fish, some waded the stream and kicked up the bottom to net aquatic macroinvertebrates, a key indicator of just how healthy the stream is. Others sampled the water for nitrate/nitrites and other key indicators of water quality. Helping Kramer were TU members Mike Jersek, Jim Reinhardt and Dave Shaffer.

For some students, the end was a bit sad because they had looked forward to seeing how the trout grew. "You got to interact with fish," said Hailey West. "I normally don't see fish." She might sneak into the classroom next year to visit the new trout.

Anthony Woxland helped net fish and released them. TIC "was a pretty good idea," he said. "This will give a good population boost." And it gave students responsibilities as well as teaching them "things are more sensitive than they seem, they are very finicky for temperature." His comments were common among several students interviewed during the time rearing the trout.

One of the surprising highlights May 22 was what students found for bugs. When Rush was checked a while ago, few bugs were found, Kramer said. This time, it was a bug bonanza with a lamprey added for interest. Students crowded around the bug table to see what was there. "Put a check mark when you find bugs," Kramer said. They are rated sensitive, less sensitive and tolerant to pollution. "That's a stonefly, that's an aquatic worm. That's a net spinner caddisfly" and he was shocked to see such large dragonfly larvae.

Before it was over, they added riffle beetles, snails, scuds and damselflies. When he added up the score—three points for the best bugs, two for okay, one for least sensitive—he came up with 22, one shy of excellent.

In looking back at TIC, Kramer said "the experience overall was very positive, well received. The students overall enjoyed it, seeing the trout



RUSHFORD-PETERSON STUDENTS SEINE FOR BUGS IN RUSH CREEK DURING THEIR SPRING TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM RELEASE.

grow ... They learned how much work it is to keep them alive, how much work it takes, how much you have to get right in the ecosystem to go from little tiny trout eggs to trout you can actually catch."

Next year, he'll do it all again.

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It all began Dec. 11 when the school received about 275 bright orange glistening rainbow trout eggs; it was one order of about 75 that were sent out that day for the TIC program. Jacob Kramer, a fifth-year biology teacher who received the eggs, said he heard about the program from TU members Mike Jersek and Jim Reinhart, both former teachers there. Kramer said he's a trout angler but he's not great. Still "it's just being out there in nature," he said. "You get to really encounter nature on a different level with it. You're walking the creeks (it's a) lot more scenic. And the trout are so beautiful." Trying to get his students also interested in being out in nature was part of the reason he signed up for TIC. When he got the eggs, he unwrapped them and laid them on a desk; he was immediately surrounded by curious ninth-graders. "I was surprised at how interested they were in it," Kramer said. Kramer said his freshmen are more the trout anglers and would be able to participate in TIC when they were sophomores. "They (this year's freshmen) are going to love that, I'm really excited for next year with that group," he said.

The goal is not just to have students watch how eggs develop into fingerlings but also in the chemistry of the water, what it takes to allow fish to survive in the wild. And it's hands-on work, he said. "There are so many different ways you can use these fish," Kramer said. "It's completely cross-curricular." Next year, he hopes to get teachers from other classes, such as English or math, using the fish for their curriculum. Students

might also research water-protection laws, "what does it mean for us" in Rushford, he said. And while not everyone is into trout angling, many in Rushford do love outdoor activities such as biking or hiking.

MNTU Education Supervisor Amber Taylor said it's part of a nationwide program, with some states having Salmon in the Classroom instead. Wisconsin is run by volunteers while Minnesota has received some large grants over the last seven years that allowed the program to grow. It began in Minnesota in 2007 when a Bemidji teacher, an avid angler, contacted the Department of Natural Resources fisheries office. After getting them on board, the Headwaters TU chapter stepped up to support the effort with funds for equipment and volunteer support. The chapter efforts still continue today with a strong partnership between Bemidji area schools and Headwaters members. Lake trout were used in the early years. Hiawatha Trout

Unlimited began a program in 2014 that included three Rochester area schools. Taylor started with MNTU in 2018.

In 2018, MNTU received a \$400,000 Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources grant for 2018-21 and hired Taylor as its education coordinator; the most recent one was for two years and \$298,000. That is when the program began to expand rapidly throughout much of the state, including some in the Southwest. She also has help from Evan Griggs, having a team of paid people helps because "there is investment in that support," Taylor said. In 2018, TIC was in about 26 schools and a few nature centers. The program now has more than 70 schools with 80 tanks. The MNTU education team worked with more than 5,600 students in the 2024-2025 school year. "This number doesn't take into account the incredible lessons teachers are doing on their own as well as the programs led by chapter volunteers with hundreds of additional students," she



STUDENTS SCOOP THEIR TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM FISH, READY TO RELEASE THEM INTO THEIR NEW HOME.

said. Taking this into account, the number involved this school year is closer to 7,000. There is a mostly even split among tanks in elementary, middle, and high schools, with more high school teachers joining than younger grades over the last few years.

Like Kramer, she said TIC goes well beyond trout eggs and teaches about biology, history, science, art, natural resources, social studies, ecology and natural resources conservation. “This is way beyond watching fish grow in a tank,” she said. Some students get to observe electro-shocking demos conducted by the Minnesota DNR at their releases, learning about natural resource careers and seeing them in action. “You have to care about something before you are going to make a difference,” Taylor said.

“A budget was passed by the MNTU council to keep TIC afloat in the coming school year while we hopefully get the LCCMR grant that would start July 1, 2026 and would be three years worth of funding,” she said.

Essentially the same thing happened a few years ago, we did not get the LCCMR grant and a budget was passed to keep everything going through the year, to include the chapters chipping in.

An interesting side effect is that it helps students with behavior management, such as with autism, she said. Seeing the fish is soothing, which is why many dental offices have fish tanks, she said.

Teachers write up year-end reports and they see a big impact from little trout, Taylor said. Not everything works out, there are glitches, fish can die en route to a stream to be released, she said. “Talking to kids about that fact is important,”

Maybe TIC will lead to careers in natural resources, but many know little about the outdoor environment and this helps teach about that. “We plant a lot of little seeds with this program,” she said.

Here are some of the students’ stories: Interviewing several students was quite fascinating, learning what they knew about the local streams, didn’t know but mostly about what they were learning from those growing rainbow trout.

Kensley Snyder, a sophomore, said she trout fished when she was younger but has been busy with school. She likes TIC because she believes in it “because you increase the trout population.” She’s learning mostly about water, “that you have to test the water and make sure the water is perfect so they can actually survive. We learn how many naturally died, what the odds are.” Streams in the area obviously are right for trout but she fears pollution could change that. She was surprised how fast they grow. It had been only about five weeks. “I didn’t think they would hatch and get as big as they are right now.”

Classmate Jack Riddle also once tried trout fishing but gave it up. When he heard about TIC, “I was kind of surprised because we’ve never done it before but I thought it was cool, it’s another thing to do in the classroom ... (it’s) more hands on, you can do stuff with the fish every day.” It’s exciting to see them grow, he said. He has been learning about pH,

bacteria, wildlife in the water and hydrogen bonds. He said he sneaks a peek at them now and then to see how they are growing.

On a Feb. 4 Kramer worked with students Sebastian Escobar and Christian Zibrowski who listened as the teacher explained how to take water samples and what to look for in the tank. Zibrowski took just the right amount of water, added five drops of reagents and shook the tube. Then he waited to see what color it was.

Escobar peered into the tank: “I think they’re looking pretty good,” he said. “They are all very active.” When done, Kramer said “that’s it for the day.” Escobar said it was his first time testing. “I think it’s pretty cool that we can send out some trout into the environment,” he said. He learned one thing quickly: “You really need to take care of them to live ... They learn when growing up and they adapt to this environment. They find the specific areas to live to really help them to thrive.” What areas? “I don’t really know yet. I’ll research that,” he said.

Zibrowski had other thoughts: “They are pretty high maintenance,” he said. “You need to be taking care of them” with the right pH and nitrates. Some have died so he’s impressed they can live at all. “There must be a lot of good stuff they are eating in the water,” he said.

Cayden Lea, unlike other students, is an avid trout angler, often with his grandparents Steve and Linda Lea. “I love it, it’s fun coming out with them and spending time with them. I caught some super nice ones,” he said. He especially likes fishing in the evening around sunset. “I like catching (the) fish and being able to see the outdoors.”

As for TIC, he’s learned more about those trout he seeks, and catches. They grow fast, they like certain foods, need



LAMPREY CAUGHT IN RUSH CREEK DURING MACROINVERTEBRATE SAMPLING.

the right temperature and he appreciates “how delicate they are and how we have to protect them.” He’s amazed they can live as well as they do.

On May 2, Kramer looked over the tank and realized Scolly was missing. He asked students but none knew. Scolly was a small trout, probably with something like scoliosis and was bent. And Scolly was smaller, making it a good target for bigger, stronger trout. “He’s probably been eaten by now. Haven’t seen him in a long time, he’s been eaten because people check every day,” he said. “They can be cannibalistic.” Trout do have hierarchies, he said.

One trout on the surface was easily two and a half inches long. When they feed the fish, they sprinkle food on top but also send some down to smaller fish. So far, the tank had no dieoffs, he said.

Elias Johnson was one of two students testing that day. He’s also a trout angler and knows “we’ve got quite a bit of them (trout).” The DNR does a lot of work and many people come to fish the trout. He knows you need good water quality to keep the fish alive. TIC has increased his knowledge of the fish. His knowledge “is a little bit better because I get a better understanding of how they grow up.” And he knows the streams has stoneflies and cased caddis. Though he sees the aquariums, he seldom peaks at the small trout.

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.



MIKE JERESEK WATCHES AS RUSHFORD-PETERSON STUDENTS (ANTHONY VOXLAND, IN THE FOREGROUND) NET TROUT REARED IN THE SCHOOL.

BROOK TROUT ABOVE BARRIERS

SUMMERTIME NORTH SHORE EXPLORATION

By Carl Haensel



BOTH LARGE AND SMALL STREAMS THROUGHOUT THE MINNESOTA NORTH SHORE SUPPORT QUALITY BROOK TROUT POPULATIONS FOR SUMMERTIME ANGLERS.

As spring slides into summer, it's the perfect time to explore on the Minnesota North Shore for brookies. With over 1,200 miles of designated trout water flowing in St. Louis, Lake and Cook Counties, there is enough water to spend a lifetime fishing. Our northern brook trout are most active in the summertime, and they're often feeding on a wide variety of terrestrial insects along with the caddisfly and mayfly hatches that make fishing most enjoyable. Bigger brookies start chasing baitfish in the warmer waters too. Here are some tips to start finding and catching brook trout up north this summer.

Above barriers?

To start your exploration, it's important to figure out where the fish are. On North Shore streams, brookies are most commonly found in good numbers above the migratory fish barrier in each watershed. Other than the Knife River, all North Shore streams have waterfalls that block fish migration from Lake Superior. Above falls, streams are dominated by wild, naturally reproducing brook trout. From the barrier area upstream to the headwaters, look for brook trout in spots with good water depth and woody cover. For trout to live and survive from year to year, they like to have access to areas with at least a couple of feet of water depth. Those deeper, upstream areas can hold the dream brook trout you've been looking for.

Catching Wild Brookies

If you're new to the wild brook trout game, it's important to realize that our trout up north are always looking for food. With watersheds that average about 20% as productive as Driftless streams, trout are constantly on the search for food to grow and survive. While this does mean we have fewer fish up north, the bright side is that they are usually much more aggressive and voracious than Driftless trout, even on bright, sunny days. Attractor dry flies work great for fly anglers searching for active fish. Fluffy foam patterns like Hippie

Stompers, Foamulators and other similar small terrestrial or stonefly imitations in sizes 10-14 work well on fast water. Elk Hair Caddis and Parachute Adams patterns in sizes 12-16 do well when a hatch is present in the evenings. Brookies are rarely picky with little need to match the hatch, unlike trout in many other areas. Don't plan to fish brookies during the Hex hatch, since they're often inactive at night, compared to brown or rainbow trout. Anglers looking to double their chances will have good luck adding a trailing nymph to their dry fly rig to make a hopper-dropper combo. Try using small Copper Johns or Beadhead Prince Nymphs in sizes 14-16 to get the fish interested.

Streamer fishing for brookies is a ton of fun up north. From classic patterns like the Pass Lake to more modern Beadhead Crystal Woolly Buggers, they will all take fish. Larger brook trout that are focused on eating baitfish can be aggressive when you toss a streamer in the water. Use size 8-12 streamer patterns to fool the fish, and focus on the smaller patterns most of the time, especially when you're finding smaller brookies. While all color choices for streamers will work, black, white and olive tend to be regular favorites.

Electrofishing numbers from the Minnesota DNR have shown that keeping wild brook trout in our streams up north simply is not sustainable. While there absolutely are beautiful wild brook trout up north, larger fish that reach the 12-16 inch range are significantly less common. In many streams, only a handful of fish like this might be found in a half-mile of water, if they're around at those sizes at all. Keeping even a few larger fish can impact other anglers' ability to have a quality day on the water for the entire season—or longer. If you're looking for fish for the pan, there are more sustainable options than North Shore streams.

High Water Temps - When to Fish

When the weather gets hot up north, so

do the trout. Our North Shore streams don't have the springflow that Driftless streams have, and temperatures fluctuate with the weather. Hot, sunny days can push some of our trout streams into very stressful ranges for trout. Plan to bring a thermometer along with you when you fish. While our brook trout might not die until the water reaches near 78F, catching and handling them can quickly push them over the edge from stress. In the summer, fish early in the day when water temps are cool, and then get off the water as it warms in the afternoon. Temperatures over 68F begin to be stressful for brook trout, and are a good point to start thinking about curtailing your fishing.

Taking water temps is also a good way to assess if the reach that you're looking to fish has brook trout at all! Some of the far upper reaches of our trout streams on the North Shore come directly out of lakes or large beaver impoundments. The temps in some of these remote headwaters can be too high to support trout on a regular basis, and while they're still protected as designated trout water, you won't find much fishing action. A

thermometer reading on a warm July or August day will help you figure out the details.

Removing Artificial Barriers

Minnesota Trout Unlimited's habitat work, led by Dr. Jennifer Biederman, has been removing additional barriers caused by failing roadways and culverts around the shore. Removing these barriers help fish move throughout the watershed, finding coldwater refuges in the summertime, spawning areas in the fall, and deeper overwintering habitat late in the year. Brook trout have a great need to move about in the watershed, depending on the time of year. Additional work continues in the Baptism River watershed this season that visiting anglers can check out. Previously replaced barriers on streams like Hockamin Creek are a great place to start if you'd like to see what TU has been working on recently up north!

Carl Haensel is the Northern Minnesota Vice Chair for MNTU and lives in Duluth. He operates the fly fishing guide service Namebini and is the author of Fly Fishing Minnesota.



WILD BROOK TROUT ON THE NORTH SHORE ARE HUNGRY AND MORE AGGRESSIVE THAN THEIR DRIFTLESS COUNTERPARTS. LOWER STREAM FERTILITY OFTEN LEADS TO LESS PICKY FISH.

A REEL NEED

YOU DON'T NEED THE BELLS AND WHISTLES

By Paul Connors

My passion for fly fishing was ignited when I was a kid, but was solidified forever by a guy on an inflatable giraffe.

I grew up in northern New Jersey, farm country. Dad milked cows by hand for a farm cooperative, mom was a seamstress. We were poor, although only monetarily. Maybe we received someone else's mail by mistake, as my parents got an Orvis catalog just before the holidays every year. It was far too expensive for farmers like us. I studied that catalog like a driver's manual. I daydreamed of fly fishing for golden trout in Wyoming like the people in Outdoor Life magazine, traveling through mountain passes on pack horses. When I was 10, I mailed out a request for travel brochures about Montana with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

What I wanted was an Orvis custom bamboo rod and a Battenkill reel. What I had was my brother's beat up Mitchell 304 spinning reel, a department store rod, 8-pound test mono, and a couple of C.P. Swing spinners. It worked. I learned how to catch pickerel, bass, and an occasional trout. This rig worked well with a size 10 snelled Eagle Claw hook, split shot, and worms too. Fly fishing was an elitist undertaking, unattainable for a bobber-toting kid like me.

When I was 12 or so, I talked my dad and older brother into buying an 8-foot blue fiberglass Abu-Garcia fly rod, purchased from Playtogs discount store in Middletown, New York. We also got a "pre-loaded" maroon and gold fly reel that had a click toggle and no drag. Our first flies were in a white plastic circular dispenser, with a clear top that spun around to dispense them. I couldn't cast the dang rod like a spinning outfit, so I didn't try it out much. Eventually, I could get 20 feet of line out. Ten and two was all I knew. I had no instructor.

Fishing became my religion. There was a large pond within walking distance of our house chock-full of bluegills, pickerel, bass, lily pads and duckweed. We called it "Duck Pond." My dad, brother, and I fished it all the time with spinners, worms, shiners, and Rapalas. We caught plenty and threw them back. Occasionally the DNR would throw in a few trout from the stocking truck, but you had to get there soon after to catch them. Big pickerel would inhale those suckers like barracuda at an "all-you-can-eat-anchovy-buffet." Flowing into the north side of the pond was a tiny no-named brook that eventually meandered its way through the pond and down to Big Flat Brook, storied trout water for Jersey. The stocking truck occasionally threw in a few trout in the no-name brook too.

One perfectly warm early summer evening at sunset, my dad and I were lazily fishing off the bridge at "the hole" above the pond, not catching, but who cares. A lingering population of lucky-to-be-alive

trout were rising to a flock of small white moths. My dad called them Millers. We just happened to have a cream-colored fly with white wings in the plastic dispenser in our tackle box. We drove home to grab that flimsy fly rod and came back fast. The stocked trout were elusive, staying just far enough away to avoid my awkward and splashy 20-foot casts. Despite my ineptitude, I had one good enough cast and not only hooked, but landed my first glittery rainbow trout just before dark, yessir, on a fly rod. I kept that 10-inch fish, cleaned it myself, and mom fried it up for me that night. Glorious! Dad was proud, I'm sure I got an "attaboy" and a slap on the back. He and my brother never did fly fish, but I was hooked. I was 16 or so at the time, right about when my culinary career took over.

I worked as a professional cook, chef, and pastry chef in restaurants for over 40 years. From when I got started, to the day I left the profession, I worked hard and a lot. Six-day work weeks, upwards of 50 or 60 hours a week, including nights, weekends, and holidays were the norm. I worked for great restaurants driven by some of the best chefs on the planet. They made damn sure I had little leisure time, and made little money. My spare time, chores and relationships suffered when I made time to go fishing. I spin-fished for bass and trout when I had time, as I knew I would always catch something. I knew how to fish. But the lure of fly fishing stuck like a barbed hook to the back of my brain. I reeled my way back to it in my 40s while working in Boston. I learned there were striped bass and bluefish in Boston Harbor and down at the Cape. I bought a surf rod and a saltwater spinning reel to target them. Then I learned of a character named Jack Gartside.

The Man

As a chef in Boston, I learned that real professionals only procure their knives at a place called Stoddard's Cutlery. The storefront, tucked away on a narrow wobbly cobblestone street near Boston Common, was reminiscent of a wand shop in Diagon Alley. Since 1800 or so, Stoddard's had been Boston's most renowned purveyor of the finest quality cutlery, writing instruments, hunting knives, and gear for the outdoors. Four presidents—Kennedy, Roosevelt, Coolidge, and Eisenhower were included in the exclusive list of Stoddard's customers, along with famous chefs such as James Beard and Julia Child, and baseball god Ted Williams. I didn't know any of that at the time.

Walking into Stoddard's was like walking into a centuries old London jewelry store. Everything was precious and expensive. I felt way out of place. It reeked of old money and cigar smoke. Lying on top of one illuminated display case was a magazine that looked out of place, Fly Fishing in Salt Waters. On the cover was this guy, Jack Gartside, fly fishing

on the back of an inflatable giraffe. His hand-tied flies were displayed in the case below. The proprietor wandered over as I was leafing through the magazine and gave me the lowdown on Jack. He was a local celebrity, a world renowned fly fisherman, fly tier, and, unceremoniously, a cab driver in Boston. I learned that day that you don't have to be rich to be famous. I learned that Stoddard's doubled as a fly shop. I learned the giraffe had a name. Gerald. I learned from Gartside, you could fish for ocean-going fish species with a fly rod on the cheap. (Fun fact: Stoddard's was home to the first and oldest organized fly tying club in America, United Fly Tiers, started in the 1950s.)

I purchased the magazine, bought a used 8wt fly rod and reel, a few of Mr. Gartside's flies, and started wading and fishing the estuaries surrounding Boston Harbor. (I never did purchase a knife, as they were cost prohibitive.) I was only fishing at first, not catching. Eventually I managed to coax a few good fish to the shore. Glorious! I lived in East Boston and could bike to fishing spots around the harbor when I had time. I was fly fishing. Someone stole my bike one evening while I was fishing below the bridge where I parked it. I walked home, rod between my legs, wishing I had purchased a bike lock.

I did eventually meet Mr. Gartside at a fly fishing event and was able to tell him he was an inspiration. He was tying flies at the time and seemed unfazed. He had better things to think about. I would see him here and there in my six-plus years living in Boston, both driving his cab and wading the flats around town. He was legendary. Jack was a self proclaimed boy at heart, he rented his cab solely to finance his passion. When he accumulated enough cash, he would go fishing, sometimes for weeks at a time, until he ran out of money. He only had two rods. I didn't realize Jack was as responsible for my fly fishing endeavors as anyone was, until I started writing this piece. Funny thing, discovering insights through your writing. There are many awesome stories about Jack, Google him.

Here is what I learned from Gartside. Fly tying is fun, cool, and doable. Roadkill is affordable and works well for tying material. Fly fishing is not just for the elite. The best time to fish is when you can. The best fishing equipment is what you have. Need is the engine of ingenuity. Be a kid at heart.

When I moved here to my beloved Minnesota in 2002, one of my then new brothers-in-law was a serious fly fisherman. He quickly introduced me to the Rush and the Kinnikinnick. I did poorly at first, he would catch 15 or twenty fish and I would catch one, sometimes. Trout fishing in a stream is an entirely different kettle of crappies than throwing saltwater flies. Eventually I learned where trout resided, how to mend, how to use

the correct leaders and tippets, tie knots that held, sneak up low, sink a nymph to the depths of a pool and connect a dropper to a dry fly. I can now out fish him sometimes. Glorious!

In Conclusion

I'm retired now and have a fixed income. I drive a 17-year-old silver VW Rabbit hatchback that I have had since 2010. It is inching up to 200,000 miles and its ultimate demise. The body is rusted out yet it continues to get me to rivers and streams. My little car embodies my fly fishing experience. I channel Gartside. I have a one-man pontoon boat I got for free on Craigslist. (It needed a few patches). I tie my own flies, get them on sale for a buck a piece, or occasionally "borrow" them from others. I inherited a ton of fly tying paraphernalia. My vise and tools were a Christmas gift. The thread I use to tie is not made for tying flies but it works if you saturate it with Sally Hanson Hard as Nails, which I confiscated from my wife. I tie flies with dead dog's hair. (The infamous Miso Scud!) My waders always have two or three small to medium leaks. I buy them on sale at Cabela's once every ten or twelve years and patch them up as needed. I was given a sweet fly vest last year from my generous brother-in-law when I mistakenly left mine at the river one day. (I got that one on sale for 20 bucks) He threw in some dries, nymphs, and gave me a couple fly boxes with more flies for Christmas last year. I get stuff he no longer needs or wants. (One man's garbage is another man's gold!) My neck gaiter I got for free at the Star Tribune booth at The State Fair. My wading boots were inexpensive when I bought them three years ago, they are currently falling apart and work just fine. I don't have a Sage, Scott, Winston or Orvis fly rod. I don't own anything with a Simms logo.

You don't need to be rich to fly fish, you need people, like Jack Gartside and a generous brother-in-law. You don't need expensive equipment to deceive and catch fish, you need knowledge and experience. You don't need Solunar tables and tide charts, you need a couple hours and an understanding spouse.

That flimsy blue fly rod and the maroon click reel are over 50 years old and are still catching bass and bluegills at a cabin in Wisconsin. My car started this morning. I'm going. Gloriousness!

Paul was a moderately successful chef and pastry chef for most of his adult life. He threw it all away to become a writer of creative non-fiction. He believes he is mostly genuine, sincere, and occasionally professional. He loves fly fishing. He proclaims to be a writer, as he has written the words you are reading. He has a supportive wife, two adult children, and an emotionally supportive teenage golden retriever named Birdie.



MNTU EDUCATION UPDATE

JUNE 2025

By Amber Taylor, MNTU Education Program Supervisor



LEFT: EAST METRO AREA FISHERIES SUPERVISOR TJ DeBATES PASSES OFF A NET FULL OF YEARLING RAINBOW TROUT TO AN EXCITED STUDENT FOR RELEASE INTO THE VERMILLION RIVER. THE DNR RELEASES THOUSANDS OF YEARLING RAINBOWS IN THE VERMILLION AS A PUT AND TAKE OPPORTUNITY FOR ANGLERS EACH SPRING AND THIS LUCKY GROUP OF TIC STUDENTS HAPPENED TO BE THERE THAT DAY TO ASSIST!



RIGHT: EVAN GRIGGS, MNTU EDUCATION SPECIALIST, WORKS WITH HEADWATERS CHAPTER YOUTH EDUCATION VOLUNTEER VAL WAGNER TO PASS OUT CUPS OF TROUT FOR STUDENTS TO RELEASE INTO THE CLEARWATER RIVER NEAR BEMIDJI. VAL HAS BEEN VOLUNTEERING WITH TIC SINCE THE FIRST TANK WAS SET UP AT THE BEMIDJI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ALMOST 18 YEARS AGO!

We are not able to track each individual student that participates in Trout in the Classroom to see what they learned and how those experiences shape their life and career choices as they grow into adulthood. However, as the program's reach spreads throughout the state, we do know that thousands of students engage with TIC at some level each year. In the 2024-2025 school year alone, our team worked directly with over 5,700 students, which does not include all of the activities and field trips teachers are doing throughout the year without MNTU assistance, which I estimate would add an additional 1,000 or more students.

While there are, of course, varying levels of future environmental stewards and advocates, natural resource career pursuits, and outdoor enthusiasts, given the sheer number of students participating each year, there is no doubt that this program has an impact. The lessons they learn about trout and other fishes of MN, the waters they live in, their biology, life cycles, advocacy, volunteering, habitat restoration, stewardship, etc., all benefit the current and future conservation of not only Minnesota's coldwater resources, but the watersheds, lakes, rivers, creeks, groundwater, trees, plants, and animals that support them.

This April, there was a volunteer tree planting opportunity to assist the Browns Creek Watershed District and their partners in planting over 100 trees as part of an extensive restoration project along this special little creek. One of the TIC teachers from Stillwater Area High School was there and he mentioned he was expecting students to show up. I figured he must be giving extra credit or having it be part of a project for them to be attending. After all, it was 8 a.m. on a Saturday morning! However, when I asked he said "Nope! They all wanted to come." He had six stu-

dents show up and they planted trees until the end, some of the last ones to leave. These things give me hope for the future of our natural resources!

All spring releases are fun as they are a celebration of students' learning throughout the year and provide additional opportunities for them to explore the outdoors. Some schools get an added dose of excitement with opportunities like stocking fish or observing an electro-shocking demonstration with the MN DNR. Others go canoeing or fishing depending on their release site and access.

In early May, I was able to join Northfield High School fisheries students at their trout release at the Little Cannon River AMA. That morning 50 excited students piled off the bus onto the side of an otherwise quiet dirt road and carried multiple coolers full of trout from their school's two tanks. Northfield has been participating in TIC since 2021 and received a grant to add an additional tank to another science classroom this year. After the students released their fingerlings, they hiked upstream to meet a couple of MN DNR employees to observe a electro-shocking demonstration after a Q and A session about their careers as fisheries biologists. Over six different fish species were found within the two stretches of river they shocked, including rainbow trout, redbreast dace and other minnow species, as well one as one of the heritage brook trout. These students got to not only learn about a natural resource career in the fisheries field, but also got to experience the field work first hand. Those who were interested were able to hold and see the fish up close and learn about some species they did not even know existed.

At another release in Farmington, Heritage E-STEM middle school students were surprised with the opportunity to

help the DNR fisheries team stock a few thousand yearling rainbow trout into the Vermillion River. They took turns carrying nets full of large, flopping trout from the truck to the river's edge, placing them into the water. They also got to explore the DNR transport truck, learned about the DNR's stocking program, and had the chance to ask about work as DNR fisheries staff.

Join Minnesota Trout Unlimited as a TIC Classroom Ambassador for the 2025-2026 school year! We are looking for individuals that love to work with students and teachers in and out of the classroom. You don't need to be an expert, just have passion for getting students outside and excited about aquatic ecosystems!

Responsibilities include the following:

- Attend summer/fall training (dates coming soon)
- Assist with fall field macroinvertebrate study
- Support classroom tank set up and troubleshoot classroom tank and fish care issues (training is provided and MNTU staff will be available for any unsolvable issues)
- Egg delivery
- Assist with spring trout release
- Optional: Assist with winter classroom visit

Contact Amber Taylor, Education Supervisor with questions, mntu.education@gmail.com. More information and a sign up form coming soon!



TIC STUDENTS FROM HERITAGE E-STEM MIDDLE SCHOOL SHOW OFF THE TROUT FINGERLINGS THEY HELPED RAISE FROM TINY EYED EGGS, BEFORE RELEASING THEM INTO THE VERMILLION RIVER.

TROUT GO HERE

YOUTH SERIES

By Jim Emery, MNTU Educator • Photos by John Weiss

We call Minnesota the land of 10,000 lakes, and along with those lakes are numerous streams and smaller ponds. The months you spent raising trout in your classroom likely wrapped up with a bus ride to a specific body of water where your trout are being released. The Minnesota DNR, the agency whose mission it is to protect our water, land, and wildlife, gave your teacher a permit. This permit allows your class to release the rainbow trout you raised into a very specific body of water. With all the water we have in this state, odds are that there is a stream or lake close to your school that would have allowed for a shorter ride, or maybe there's even some water within walking distance.

So why all the fuss? Why did your trout have to be released in a particular place? It turns out that there are very good reasons.

The Minnesota DNR permits Trout in the Classroom schools to release fish into streams and lakes that are already designated as trout habitat. The agency is strict about this for some reasons that you probably understand pretty well after spending most of the school year with your trout, and for some reasons that are worth thinking over further.

There is more trout habitat in some parts of Minnesota than others. The DNR permits your class to release into trout habitat that is as close to where your school is located as possible, but some of you may have had a longer bus ride to get to one of these special locations. There are two or three schools that can walk to their release site and a handful more that have a short bus ride. The rest are 45 minutes to an hour or more!

Your class worked really hard to keep the trout alive and healthy, and there wouldn't be much point in releasing them into water where they couldn't survive. Your trout tank was an artificial environment containing everything your fish needed. Your class made sure the tank water was cold, but there is no chill-



TIC TANKS PROVIDE EVERYTHING A TROUT NEEDS TO SURVIVE, AND STREAMS MUST BE CLEAN AND COLD TO BE SUITABLE FOR YOUR TROUT RELEASE.

er unit in a trout stream. You changed the water to keep it clean, but no one will siphon water out of the lake or stream where your trout now live, and replace it with fresh. You fed your trout, but in the wild, they'll have to find their own nourishment.

Designated trout habitat contains all of the elements you created in your tank. There are lots of very nice lakes and streams in Minnesota that don't remain cold enough throughout the year for trout to stay alive. Some lakes have reasonably clean water that will support other species of fish, but are just not clean and well-oxygenated enough for these very sensitive trout. Waters that are clean and cold enough also need to have a thriving food web that produces the aquatic insect life that trout depend on for sustenance.

If a body of water will support rainbow trout, a decision still has to be made if rainbow trout will be a healthy addition to the water body. These fish are not native to Minnesota. Before a lake or stream is

determined to be a good place for a trout, a lot of care must be taken to ensure that they will settle into the ecosystem, and not disrupt it. Humans have made mistakes in the past by introducing species that thrive too well. European carp were brought to Minnesota about 150 years ago as a sport fish, and they are great fun to catch. Unfortunately, they reproduce too quickly, and are not eaten by enough predators. Because of this, carp have thrived in some of our lakes to the point where they've disrupted the food web,

lowering the water quality.

So, it's worth the drive to get your trout where they need to be. Your class released the rainbow trout you've cared for into a body of water where they have a chance to thrive, and will be a good addition to the ecosystem. Just as you've taken great care to keep those fish healthy to this point, lots of thought has gone into making sure they are in just the right place, once you set them free.



LEFT: TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM FISH SLIDE INTO THEIR NEW STREAM HOME. WE HOPE THEY HAVE LEARNED THE SKILLS NEEDED TO SURVIVE IN THE WILD.

RIGHT: MADISON INGVALSON HOLDS SEVERAL RAINBOW FINGERLINGS BEFORE THEY WERE RELEASED INTO RUSH CREEK THIS SPRING.



NITRATES, FEEDLOTS, AND FISH KILLS

MNTU PUSHES FOR STRONGER FEEDLOT RULES

By Kristen Poppleton, MNTU Assistant Director

Minnesota Trout Unlimited has a long history of developing awareness of, and urging action to reduce, nitrate contamination, especially where contamination impacts Minnesota's trout streams (see timeline). Regulating nitrates in Minnesota, especially the southeast, is critical to protect the region's coldwater fisheries, including brook, brown, and rainbow trout. These streams, predominantly fed by groundwater through sensitive karst geology, are highly vulnerable to nitrate contamination from feedlot practices. Elevated nitrate levels can degrade water quality, reduce dissolved oxygen, and alter habitat conditions, threatening fish survival and reproduction.

Minnesota's feedlot regulations encompass both overarching rules and specific permits, each serving distinct purposes in managing livestock operations. Generally a part of the revision process of rules, there is a time period for community input or comments. MNTU recently submitted comments to strengthen Minnesota's General Feedlot Permits. In May of 2025 the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency opened a comment period for Minnesota's Animal Feedlots Rule specifically "to amend existing feedlot rules to improve land application of manure practices to address nitrate and fish kills, establish additional technical standards to protect water quality and avoid fish kills." This comment period will be open until July 22, 2025 and is included as part of phase 3 of the nitrates work plan released by state agencies in January 2024.

Rules vs. Permits: What's the difference? The Minnesota feedlot rule establishes comprehensive standards for the management of all the roughly 24,000 animal feedlots and manure storage facilities in Minnesota. It governs various aspects, including:

- Construction and Operation: Guidelines for the design, location, and operation of feedlots.
- Manure Management: Regulations on storage, transportation, disposal, and land application of animal manure and wastewater processing.
- Environmental Protection: Measures to prevent pollution and protect water quality.

These rules apply broadly to all feedlot operations across the state, ensuring a baseline of environmental and public health protection.

Feedlot permits are issued to regulate individual operations based on their large size and potential environmental impact, in comparison with the feedlot rule which provides general requirements. Feedlots that have 1,000 animal units or more are required to get federal and state permits, making up about 1,200 of the feedlots in the state. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) administers several types of feedlot permits including National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), State Disposal System (SDS)

Permits, Construction Short-Form (CSF) and Interim Permits. These permits include specific conditions tailored to the operation, such as manure management plans, land application requirements, and monitoring protocols.

Key Differences Between Feedlot Rules and Feedlot Permits

Scope: Feedlot Rule: Applies universally to all feedlot operations, setting general standards. Feedlot Permits: Apply to some operations only, based on size, location, and environmental impact.

Function: Feedlot Rule: Establishes baseline requirements for all feedlots. Feedlot Permits: Impose additional, operation-specific conditions for the largest operations to ensure compliance with environmental standards.

Enforcement: Feedlot Rule: Violations can lead to enforcement actions applicable to all feedlots. Feedlot Permits: Non-compliance with permit conditions can result in penalties specific to the permitted operation.

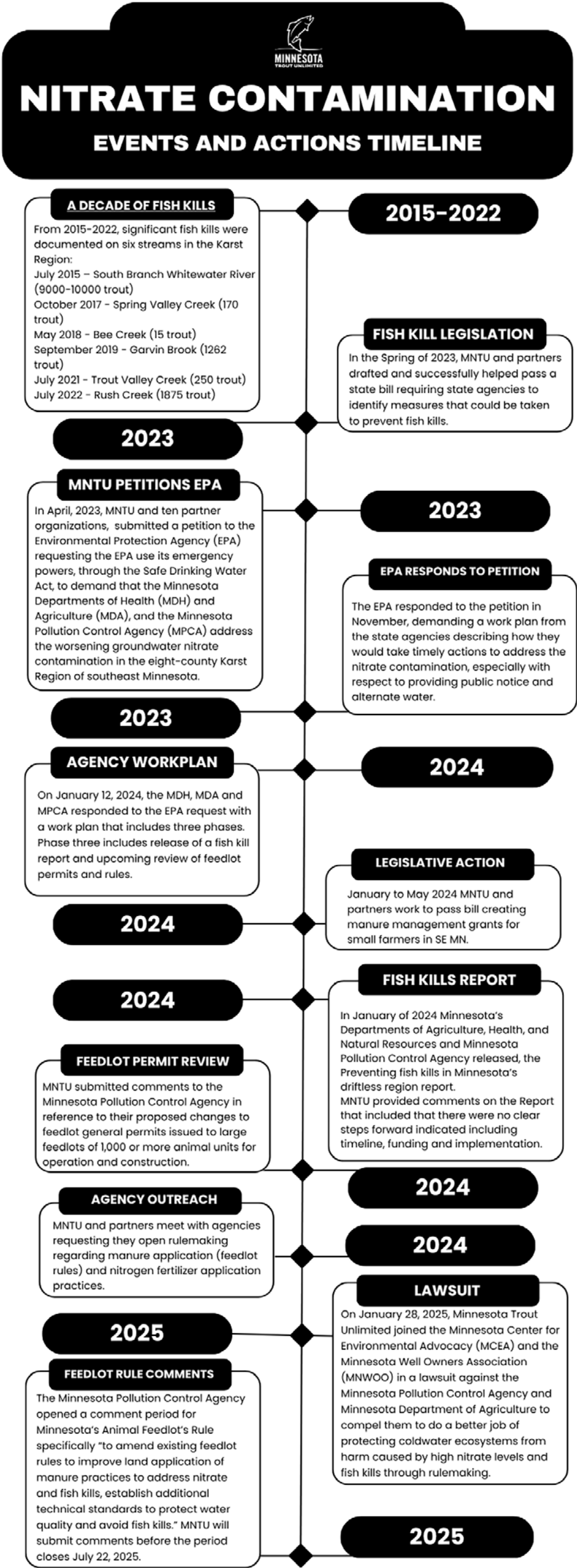
Things to Consider When Making Comments

Minnesota Trout Unlimited will be contributing comments on feedlot rulemaking because of the direct and serious impact that poorly regulated feedlots, especially poor manure application practices, can have on the coldwater streams, rivers, and groundwater that trout depend on. Some specific reasons to comment include:

- 1. Water Quality Impacts**
 - Feedlots produce large volumes of manure that can carry a variety of chemicals and nutrients including nitrogen, ammonia, and sediment into nearby waterways.
 - Nitrates reduce the size and potentially survival of trout populations and impact the macroinvertebrate populations trout depend on for food.
 - Ammonia from manure is directly toxic to fish at even relatively low concentrations and has been tied to recent fish kills in southeast Minnesota.
 - Excess nutrients can cause algae blooms that reduce oxygen levels, killing aquatic insects and stressing or killing trout.

- 2. Groundwater Contamination**
 - Trout streams depend on clean, cold groundwater.
 - Many feedlots are in the southeast Minnesota karst region, where groundwater moves quickly through cracks and sinkholes.
 - Nitrate pollution from manure can easily seep into aquifers, threatening groundwater-fed trout streams.

- 3. Habitat Degradation**
 - Poor manure management can cause erosion and sedimentation in rivers and streams.



A TIMELINE OF NITRATE CONTAMINATION EVENTS AND THE CORRESPONDING RESPONSES BY MNTU, PARTNERS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. NITRATES ARE A TOP PRIORITY ISSUE FOR MNTU AS THEY AFFECT BOTH THE HEALTH OF TROUT STREAMS AND HUMANS.

• Sediment covers up the gravel beds trout need for spawning and reduces aquatic insect populations, which are the base of the trout food chain.

4. Rulemaking is an Important Opportunity

- Feedlot rule updates can strengthen protections or weaken them. It’s important for all stakeholders to contribute their comments to ensure all concerns are addressed.
- Without groups like MNTU weighing in, the final rules could prioritize industry interests over science-based decision making and clean water, leaving coldwater ecosystems vulnerable.

Developing Our Comments

Minnesota Trout Unlimited will develop its comments over the next month and will make them available to members to consider and incorporate into their own comments. The MPCA has laid out a set of questions to guide comment development which includes the question: What specific changes to the current rules would provide improved regulations that prevent nitrate contamination to ground and surface waters and fish kills? To answer this and other questions, MNTU is analyzing the Rule for whether it ensures that manure on a feedlot or manure storage areas do not run into groundwater or streams and whether it will guarantee manure is applied to cropland at a rate, time and method that prevents nutrients from entering streams, lakes and groundwater.

In 2014, the U.S. EPA reported that of

the 18,000 feedlots registered with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, about 60% housed between 50 and 299 animal units, and thus were not required to develop manure management plans. While a single feedlot’s impact may not be that large, the cumulative impact of numerous small feedlots is huge. MNTU will recommend the Rule change to require all feedlots to develop manure management plans.

The number of large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) has increased from 468 to 1497 since 1991, and these operations are also getting bigger. According to a recent report from the Environmental Working Group, there are “23,725 current active feedlots in Minnesota, housing more than 80 million animals, producing an estimated 49 million tons of manure and 234,000 tons of nitrogen each year that go on surrounding fields (ewg.org). We also know that 70% of the state’s nitrate pollution is from cropland and that nitrate levels are particularly elevated in the southern third of the state in the sensitive karst region (MPCA, 2013). This is concerning especially in the context of recent research that shows that “legacy...nitrate, has likely not fully migrated through aquifer systems and that concentrations in certain springs, streams, and wells with older water will continue to increase until an equilibrium has been reached with current and historical land use (Kuehner, et.al., 2025).” The Animal Feedlots Rule must look more closely at density and the maximum number of animals allowed in a particular watershed,

with consideration to the vulnerable groundwater areas of the state including the karst region.

MNTU will develop specific comments regarding the need for all operations to have plans and for density of operations to be factored in. We will also emphasize that any major changes should come with support for farmers. The MPCA should ensure that there is training and financial support for farmers who invest time and money to make beneficial changes to their practice, and increased agency staffing for greater education and enforcement.

We will post our final comments and instructions on how to submit your own at mntu.org/feedlots by mid-June 2025. In addition, you are invited to join us and our partners on June 24 at a Water Quality Forum St. Charles Community Center in St. Charles, MN. Speakers will include Chris Jones, an Iowa research engineer known for his work and writing on agriculture’s impact on water quality; Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy discussing the MPCA Feedlot Rules; and Paul Wotzka, Minnesota Well Owners Organization.

Information from the MPCA

We encourage you to attend a public information session in your area! The comment period for this rulemaking is open until Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.

Watch the recording of the virtual webinar held on May 19 and/or an in-person

information session held throughout the state in June to provide the context necessary to make informed comments on the proposed rulemaking.

In-person public information sessions will be held throughout the state in June. Written comments can be submitted at these meetings, as well as afterwards.

- June 3 — Hinckley (9:30-11:30 a.m.), Little Falls (1:30-3:30 p.m.)
- June 4 — Morris (9-11 a.m.), Detroit Lakes (2-4 p.m.)
- June 5 — Thief River Falls (9:30-11:30 a.m.), Bemidji (2-4 p.m.)
- June 17 — Paynesville (2-4 p.m.)
- June 18 — Marshall (9:30-11:30 a.m.), Worthington (2-4 p.m.)
- June 24 — New Ulm (9:30-11:30 a.m.), Albert Lea (2:30-4:30 p.m.)
- June 26 — Chatfield (9:30-11:30 a.m.), Zumbrota (2:30-4:30 p.m.)

The address for each public information session can be found by visiting the MPCA's events and meetings webpage. www.pca.state.mn.us/events-and-meetings?combine=feedlots#events

Comments must be submitted in writing to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) via the rulemaking e-Comments website at minnesotaoah.granicusideas.com/discussions

Alternatively, comments may be submitted via U.S. mail to:
OAH attn: William Moore, OAH
600 N Robert St. PO Box 64620
St. Paul, MN 55164-0620

FIVE STAR ACCOMMODATIONS

By Bob Luck

I used to have no problem driving 120 miles to Preston or Winona, fishing all day, and driving back that night. No longer. My night vision and reflexes have deteriorated, while my judgment has improved. The kind of judgment that realizes it may not be a good idea to drive at high speed on a dark road teeming with deer after a full day of fishing and possibly a beer or two. Now if I venture south of Rochester or east of Menominee, I find a friend who is a better driver, or I make it a multi-day trip and stay overnight.

I have spent my whole life developing a reputation as a cheapskate, and I don’t plan to squander it by splurging on accommodations. I stay in budget motels and try to pay less than \$100 a night. My gold standard is the Trailhead Inn in Preston. A lovely stretch of the Root River is across the street, and I paid \$75 a night the last time I stayed there. The mattresses are firm, and the sheets are clean. There is no hint of cigarette smoke, and none of those air fresheners that smell even worse. The shag carpet is worn and slightly suspicious looking, but it isn’t sticky and there are no obvious stains, so I figure it is innocent until proven guilty. The air conditioner sounds like a vacuum cleaner with indigestion, but there are front and rear windows with screens that create a pleasant draft if I shut off the a/c, open the windows, and sleep as the good Lord intended. Rooms come equipped with a microwave and refrigerator, and there is an

IGA a minute away to stock up on food if I don’t want to eat out. There is even a full-sized coffee maker instead of one of those new single-serve machines that brews dishwater and prove conclusively that progress does not move in a straight line. The WiFi works. The shower has acceptable water pressure, the towels are clean, and soap and shampoo are included. Not that they do much good: the water is so hard I wouldn’t be surprised to see calcium pebbles pouring out of the shower head, but that is par for the Driftless. There is a porch out front to dry out boots and waders. The manager texts me a code to unlock the door, so I don’t have to worry about disturbing her if I want to check in after the evening hatch. It may not be the Ritz or the Four Seasons, but you won’t find those in the Driftless anyway. Five stars all the way.

Airbnbs haven’t really caught on in the Driftless, and most of the ones that are available are outside my price range, but I have found a few under \$100 a night that I like, including a stylish apartment in downtown Winona and a cowboy-themed cabin on a farm that overlooks the Big Green River in southwest Wisconsin. Others have been, shall I say, quirkier. There was the Amish-built cottage overlooking Bishops Branch outside Viroqua where I took my daughter, Marisa. Great view and lovely construction—along with hundreds of dead ants covering the floor. Marisa took one look at the place and said, “You’re lucky you didn’t bring Mom along.” Or the place

in Boscobel whose gregarious owner just couldn’t get the message that I was there to fish—not spend the evening on his porch chatting. And the old farmhouse owned by a musician more interested in playing his fiddle than doing basic housework. He left dirty dishes to soak in the sink and washed them only when it started to overflow. The grease on the kitchen floor was so thick that football cleats would have been a good idea. The latch on his screen door was broken, and he told me he hadn’t got around to fixing it. “A possum wandered in last week and I almost stepped on it when I was going to the bathroom in the middle of the night,” he told me. “Scared the kittens out of me.” Another reason why it is always good to have a headlamp along on a fishing trip.

Camping is even cheaper, and during the pandemic summer of 2020, it was the only alternative. I enjoyed it so much that I figured I might make a habit of it: Trout are tastier grilled over a campfire, beer is colder out of a cooler, and coffee is fresher served at a picnic table as the sun rises. When the lodging restrictions ended in 2021, though, I went back to motels. A motel bed is more comfortable, and I don’t love camping in the rain, but the biggest issue is time. Setting up and taking down camp consume more time than driving to a motel, and at exactly the wrong time—in the morning and evening when fishing is best. I still camp with friends a couple of times a year, and I may take a rod along, but the

primary purpose of those trips is camping, not fishing. It’s like what I’ve heard about fishing with a dog. If you really want to fish, stay in a motel and leave your dog at home.

Rules are made to be broken, and when I head to the Driftless with my wife Sahya, the \$100-a-night rule goes out the window. Sahya is not interested in worn carpeting, noisy air conditioners or moldy shower curtains, and she does not want to share her room with a 6-legged creature—alive or dead. I make a show of complaining about her expensive tastes, but I secretly enjoy the places she picks. Evan Griggs (aka the Carp Whisperer) took me fishing in a stormwater pond and told me to fish near the aerator. Carp can live in stagnant water, but that doesn’t mean they won’t take more oxygen if they can get it. That’s kind of how I am with luxury hotels. Sahya’s favorite place in the Driftless is the Hotel Fortney in Viroqua. Built in 1899 and restored by a local craftsman who also raises organic beef cattle, it features high ceilings, large windows, hardwood floors, plush cotton bathrobes and freshly brewed coffee from a local roasting company. The bar on the first floor has a great selection of craft beers, and pizza from the Driftless Cafe, two doors down. It’s not the Ritz or Four Seasons—if you ask me, it is better.

Bob Luck is a former Twin Cities Chapter president and an avid angler.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS

YOU MAKE FISHING GREAT!



Minnesota Trout Unlimited expresses our appreciation to each of the record 288 generous donors who donated during our last fiscal year, which ran from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025. Your collective contributions totaled an impressive \$130,000 for the mission! Regardless of the amount, your gifts enable Minnesota TU's habitat improvement, policy ad-

vocacy, and education. Once again last year, 100% of Minnesota TU Board Members and staff gave financially in fiscal 2025.

We always enjoy hearing from our supporters, including the encouraging comments we received over the last year!

"We enjoy working with volunteers and staff with MNTU and Gitche Gumee TU. Keep up the efforts." Laurie & Jim Arndt, Duluth

"I joined TU in the 1980s and have loved it ever since." James Crozier, Brainerd

"Keep up the good work. I don't think there is any organization that does what you are doing for fishing in Minnesota. Thank you for all your work." Gary Grabko, St. Paul

"Thank you for your work on neonics and other issues that impact southeast Minnesota streams." Jim Granum, Fountain City, WI

"We thoroughly enjoyed your fall field trip and even the buckthorn cleaning day at Miesville Ravine. Here's a little to help keep it going." Robert Mazanec, St. Paul

"We love the wonderful work that MN Trout Unlimited does each and every year. Our family enjoys and plays in trout streams throughout the state and beyond. Keep up the wonderful work!" Tara, Fall & Daniel Owens, Minneapolis

"We need more allies to express outrage at Ag (manure, neonics)-related/originated fish kills." Robert Rowe, Minneapolis

"My brother Doug was an avid fisherman. Please accept this memorial in his honor on behalf of his siblings." Jennifer Sauk, Albert Lea

"Thanks for all the good work! Special concern is the lack of easement acquisitions. Critical waters are getting ignored. (Also) the devastation of critical habitat being lost and ignored." Robert Smith, Bemidji

"I was one of the bus riders on Saturday's bus trip. Phenomenal!!!! Thank you." Paul Stoll, St. Paul

"Good work, folks! I've fished the Driftless Area before it was called that! (I'm a) former chapter president in Montana...lots more!" Warren Wiley, Dalton

"Fight with our Congress to save the Boundary Waters & our streams from mining. We need to protect all of our wild areas. Thanks for the work that you do." Anonymous Riverkeepers Council member

We strive for accuracy and welcome corrections to Giving Coordinator Mark Abner, mark.abner@mntu.org

River Keepers Council

The Riverkeepers Council recognizes Minnesota TU donors of \$1,000 or more annually. Riverkeepers Council donors are invited to regular fishing and project-viewing outings and receive personalized communications regarding the impact of their extraordinary support. We appreciate our donors at any level, and we invite and welcome others who are in a position to contribute more to join the Riverkeepers Council.

Riverkeepers Council donors for Fiscal 2025 and until the time of printing:

\$10,000 >

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- Kay Erickson and Michael Madigan
- Peder M. Yurista

\$3,000 - \$9,999

- Anonymus
- Guido Gliori
- Charles & Jennifer Phelps - Ritz Family Foundation
- Greg McNeely
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- Dan Peterson
- Jennifer Sauke & Family in Memory of Douglas G. Sauke

\$1,000 - \$2,999

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- In Memory of Charles L. and Betty Wilkinson

* New Riverkeepers Council donor

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WHAT ARE DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS AND HOW CAN THEY BENEFIT YOU?

By Mark Abner, MNTU Giving Coordinator

As someone who cares deeply about conservation and preserving Minnesota's trout streams for future generations, you may be looking for effective ways to amplify your philanthropic impact. A donor-advised fund (DAF) is a popular and flexible option. Whether you're new to the concept or exploring it as part of your giving strategy, donor-advised funds offer a powerful tool to support nonprofits like Minnesota Trout Unlimited while providing tangible benefits to you as a donor.

A donor-advised fund is like a personal charitable giving account, but with additional advantages. It's a fund you establish with a sponsoring organization—such as a community foundation or a financial institution, likely your existing brokerage—that allows you to contribute assets, claim an immediate tax deduction, and recommend grants to your favorite charities

over time. You can think of it as a way to streamline and maximize your charitable giving while keeping your focus on the causes you care about most.

Why choose a donor-advised fund?

For many donors, the appeal of a DAF stems from its simplicity, flexibility, and potential for growth. Here are some key advantages:

Immediate Tax Benefits: Contributing to a donor-advised fund allows you to take an immediate tax deduction—up to 60% of your adjusted gross income for cash donations and up to 30% for appreciated assets. This enables you to manage your tax planning efficiently while giving back to your community.

Streamlined Giving: A DAF centralizes your charitable contributions, making it easier to stay organized. Rather than writing multiple checks to various charities, you can contribute to your DAF, allow the fund to grow through tax-free in-

vestments, and recommend grants when you are ready.

Flexible Timing: With a DAF, you don't need to determine right away which organizations will receive your grants. You can make contributions now, take the tax deduction, and decide at your own pace how to allocate the funds. This is especially beneficial during hectic year-end giving seasons.

Gifting Appreciated Assets: A distinct advantage of a DAF is the capability to donate appreciated stocks or other non-cash assets. This allows you to avoid capital gains taxes, reduce your taxable income, and increase the impact of your charitable contributions.

Focused on Legacy: For donors looking to create a lasting impact, a DAF facilitates family involvement in grant-making decisions and fosters a tradition of giving. You can also appoint successor advisors to manage the fund on your

behalf, ensuring your commitment to conservation persists.

By establishing a donor-advised fund, you can sustain vital conservation efforts while benefiting from the convenience and effectiveness of a proven giving tool. Minnesota Trout Unlimited depends on the generosity of supporters like you to protect and restore cold-water fisheries throughout the state. As many of our hundreds of donors have discovered, with a donor-advised fund, you can play a crucial role in ensuring that future generations continue to enjoy Minnesota's pristine trout streams.

Are you interested in discovering how your donor-advised fund can make a difference? I would love to connect with you and explore the possibilities together.

Mark Abner, MNTU Giving Coordinator, mark.abner@mntu.org

INCLUDING MNTU IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING

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

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

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

Bequest Language

The official bequest language for Minnesota Trout Unlimited is:

Unrestricted General Legacy:

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

Specific:

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



Gift of Residuary Estate:

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

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



FLY TYING

THIN TIM

By Paul Johnson



To put this story in the right context, you need to know that I am writing this on an April afternoon sitting in the comfort of my basement fly tying room. I am sitting in my comfortable chair surrounded by my tying materials, photos and other fishing memorabilia. I guess I have had two lives in my lifetime. For most of my life, I was a contributing member of society. In the past couple years, I have become a full time fly fishing bum.

I have learned a great deal from both of my lives. I suppose I would not be able to enjoy my current life as a bum without my previous life. There has been one constant in both my professional/public life and my fly fishing bum life: The best ideas I have ever had were borrowed from someone else. Maybe that is kind of true about all ideas?

My newest good idea is a fly that I call the Thin Tim. I borrowed the idea from Walter Wiese of Yellowstone Country Fly Fishing. He calls his fly the Triple Wing BWO. Walter borrowed the idea from Charlie Craven's Timmy Fly. I am not sure where Charlie came up with

Materials List

Hook:	Size 16 Emerger
Thread:	Olive 70 denier UTC
Tail	Mayfly Brown
	Improved Micro Zelon
Thorax	BWO Superfine
	Dubbing
Wing/Post:	Silver Congo Hair

the idea. Maybe he borrowed it from someone else as well.

This is one of those flies that just seemed to catch my eye when I first watched the video of Walter tying it. I made some slight modifications to the pattern when I started tying them up this spring. I have had the opportunity to fish this fly and I am happy to report to you that the fly seems to catch a trout's eye just like it did mine.

I have been tying the fly primarily on a size 16 emerger hook. You could easily tie it down to size 18 or 20. The

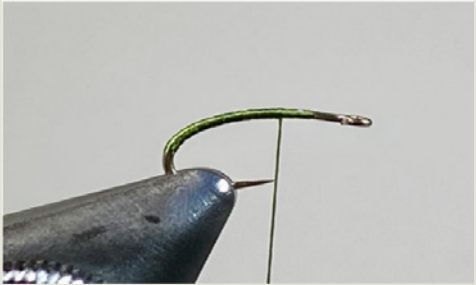


fly does ride a little lower in the water so it can be a little challenging to see if you are fishing it in broken water.

As always, if you have any questions/comments/suggestions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Just one helpful tidbit for tying this fly: save yourself extra room between the wing and the hook eye. It is very easy to crowd the eye. I found out the hard way!

paulwaconia@gmail.com



Step 1. Insert the hook into your tying vise. Start your thread at the 60% mark and wrap down the bend of the hook and return to the original tie-in point.



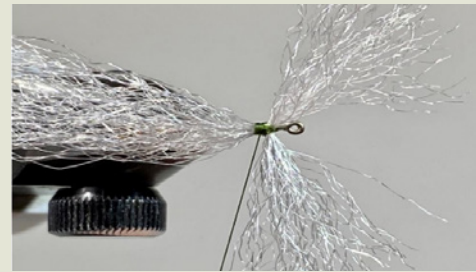
Step 2. Tie in a small clump of Zelon on top of the hook shank. Wrap back to the bend of the hook. Make one wrap of thread behind/under the tail and wrap back to the original tie-in point. Clip the tail to about a hook shank in length.



Step 3. Give your bobbin a counter-clockwise spin to flatten out the thread. Wrap down and back on the hook shank to form a smooth abdomen.



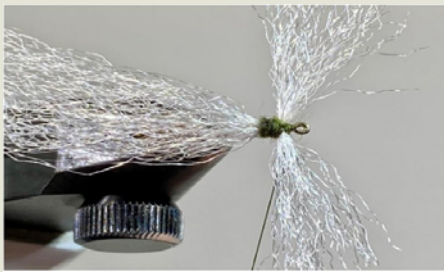
Step 4. Tie in a clump of Silver Congo Hair at the original tie-in point.



Step 5. Advance your thread in front of the Congo Hair. Split the bundle of hair in half. Make a series of "X" wraps to form the wings. You will want to leave about 1 1/2 eye lengths between the wing and the hook eye.



Step 6. Return to the original tie-in point. Form a slight dubbing noodle on your thread with the BWO Superfine Dubbing



Step 7. Create the thorax with a dubbing ball ending with your thread in front of the wings.



Step 8. Pull the tag end of the Congo Hair forward. Push back ever so slightly on the hair and secure with your tying thread.



Step 9. Create a thread dam in front of the post. Whip finish. Clip the post to about a hook shank in length.



Step 10. Pull down the wings to just below the hook point and clip the excess Congo Hair to length.



Step 11. Go fish!

Fly Fishing

Bass Tournament



August 16th

at Chambers Grove

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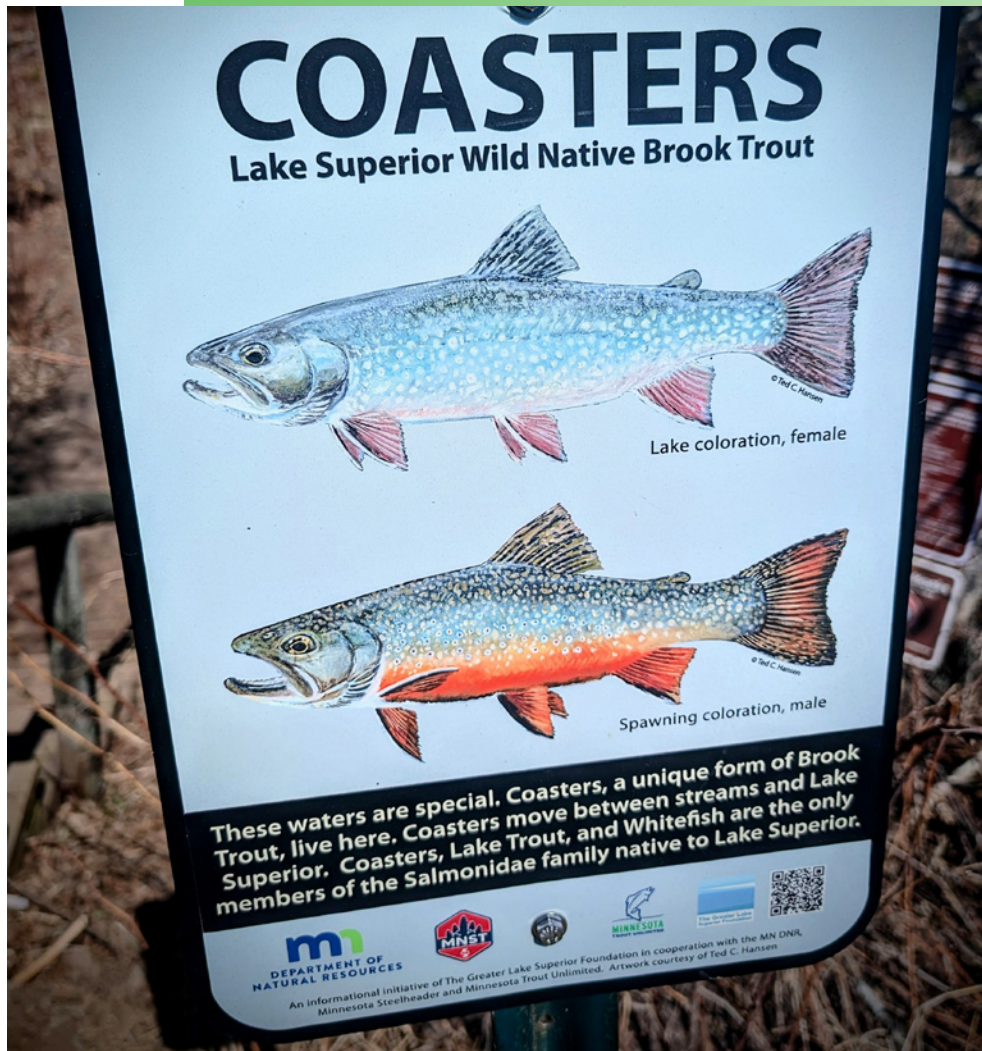








MNTU CHAPTER NEWS



GGTU HELPED SPONSOR THESE INFORMATIONAL COASTER BROOK TROUT SIGNS, NOW PLACED ALONG NORTH SHORE TRIBUTARIES.

Gitche Gume Chapter

Greetings from Duluth! I am writing this in the midst of our spring steelhead season. I hope you were able to make it up to the North Shore to try your luck at catching these elusive fish. While the rivers still held many steelhead, they proved to be even more elusive this year compared to past seasons. This is due to a multitude of reasons, primarily extreme weather events such as flooding and droughts in recent years, which have unfortunately lowered the number of steelhead returning to the rivers.

During our April "State of the Steelhead" meeting, we had the Executive Director of MNTU John Lenczewski and MN DNR Fisheries Specialist Nick Peterson share valuable information on the history and future of our North Shore fishery as TU works with the MN DNR on its next 10-year management plan.

Restoration Efforts: We are actively continuing tree planting and maintenance on our North Shore tributaries. These efforts involve both local volunteers and the larger-scale projects of MNTU. Northern Minnesota is currently experiencing its worst spruce budworm outbreak since 1961. This infestation is significantly impacting our riparian corridors by diminishing much-needed shade and bank stabilization. To combat this, we have multiple gap-cutting projects planned. These projects will clear dead trees, allowing for new growth to be planted and helping to secure the future of our cold-water fisheries.

that will be deployed in local rivers. These devices will help us gather more detailed information about our local water conditions, which is essential for planning future habitat restoration work. In conjunction with these loggers, a new PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tag program is being implemented to research the movements of our brook trout and steelhead. This combined research will help us determine the specific types of river habitat these fish seek out to thrive, informing more effective restoration strategies.

Upcoming Events: GGTU is once again partnering with the City of Duluth to offer free fly casting instruction for those interested in learning how to fly fish. These sessions will be held on June 4, at Lester Park at 6 p.m. and June 26, at Chamber's Grove at 6 p.m..

Mark your calendars for our annual "Paddle the Pads" event on Wednesday, August 16, at Chamber's Grove. This is always one of our favorite summer events! Bring your paddle-craft and fly rod for a chance to win some great prizes. Whether you attend the tournament or not, we

hope you attend our free picnic and get-together starting at 4 p.m. at the end of the event! We hope to see you there!

All details about the chapter's summer activities will be shared on our Facebook page: facebook.com/GitcheGumeTU and through our chapter emails. If you would like to stay up to date on GGTU's activities please sign up for our email list by emailing gitchegume.tu@gmail.com or scanning the QR Code.

Jason Swingen

Headwaters Chapter

The Headwaters chapter has experienced a productive spring, marked by the 25th anniversary of its Youth Fly Fishing program. This established educational initiative provides young individuals with foundational fly fishing skills, encompassing fly tying techniques, casting instruction, and essential fishing knots. This year, the program culminated in a rewarding fishing experience where participating youth successfully caught multiple fish.

Expanding its educational outreach, the chapter also conducted a fly tying session for students at Heartland Christian Academy. Four instructors guided students across grades 3 to 12 in the art of fly tying during their art classes. The favorable instructor-to-student ratio of approximately one to three ensured personalized guidance and contributed to the session's success, positioning it as a likely recurring event in the chapter's annual activities.

May 15 marked the commencement of the Trout in the Classroom Release Day. This half-day program facilitates the release of student-raised trout into the Clearwater River, coupled with engaging learning activities. The participating schools on this initial day included Gene Dillon School, with three groups, and Schoolcraft Learning Community with one session. Cass Lake-Bena

High School had their program later in the week. A special thank you to Evan Griggs and all the volunteers from the Bemidji area who helped make this a successful event.

Anticipating the summer season, the chapter will transition its focus to conducting various casting events across the state. The chapter is currently seeking volunteers in the Brainerd, Grand Rapids, Bemidji, and Alexandria areas to support these initiatives. Interested individuals are encouraged to contact kris@tu642, or any board member to offer their assistance.

Kris Williams

Hiawatha Chapter

On a warm Monday evening May 12, nine Hiawatha TU members gathered at the wayside rest along the Root River south of Chatfield for our annual trash pickup. Attendance was a bit low but we had two for each side on the mile to the north and south while Jim Nielsen stayed near the rest area and picked up there.

Chuck Cannon and I took the north-bound side toward Chatfield and we slowly worked our way toward the wayside rest. Trash was rather meager, which was great with us. Todd Christensen on the other side scored with the first interesting item of the day—some kind of big plastic hood for maybe an old computer? We never did figure out what it was.

My big find was an old bottle of Southern Comfort and I felt morally obliged to belt out "Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz," that Janis Joplin tune she often sang while drinking Southern Comfort. It wasn't much but it was the best I could do.

Things really went quite smoothly but, as usual, we couldn't get some items because they were at the bottom of steep banks that would have needed rappelling gear to safely reach. I found a large electric box that was several feet from the highway and loaded with old wires. I have no idea what it was doing there but



LEFT: SCAN THIS QR CODE TO SIGN UP FOR THE GITCHE GUMEE CHAPTER E-NEWSLETTER. RIGHT: TCTU HELD A STREAMKEEPERS TRAINING ON EAGLE CREEK THIS APRIL.



MNTU CHAPTER NEWS



I left it for MnDOT.

I was thinking just how great it was that we found so little litter when we reached the guardrail of the bridge and found trash all over. Why it was concentrated there I have no idea but we picked it up.

At the end, Todd brought extra food from his dad’s memorial service and we feasted on sandwiches and desserts. We are supposed to pick up again next fall. I think I’ll try to schedule one but I don’t think it will be a big deal. I promise I’ll try not to sing.

John Weiss

Twin Cities Chapter

Our chapter board and members are always active fishing. Many other important activities keep our focus as well.

Trout Stream Habitat Improvement and Engagement: I was fishing a trout stream running through farmland during the Minnesota trout fishing opener and noticed land erosion. The mud was filling the streambed, affecting trout habitat and the landowner losing land. It is a strong reminder that habitat work is paramount to ensure streams are kept in good conditions.

The Twin Cities Trout Unlimited chapter has increased its effort in this area as part of our strategic plan impacting streams and engaging our members. To celebrate Earth Day, about 100 volunteers met at Eagle Creek for a day of cleanup. It is now an annual ritual. We have also expanded habitat work to other Minnesota streams in close proximity to the Twin Cities such as the Vermillion River and Hay Creek. The Twin Cities chapter also reaches out to collaborate with other chapters, and other organizations such as the Friends of the Mississippi and the VRWJPO (Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization) that share similar interests and missions. More habitat work on these streams and others are planned over the summer.

Streamkeepers: Twin Cities Trout Unlimited has an active team monitoring conditions of local trout streams and reporting any concerns to the DNR for further actions, as needed.

Advocacy: Neonics are routinely found in Minnesota streams at levels harmful and lethal to aquatic insects, yet neonic-treated seeds are not regulated. Protecting and improving our trout fisheries requires us to protect and improve the aquatic insect population that trout depend on. On Monday April 21, 2025 many of our chapter members joined Minnesota TU for an informational hearing on SF3083, a bill to regulate neonic-treated seeds. This is an important issue and we will continue to support legislation to regulate neonics.



THE HEADWATERS CHAPTER ASSISTED WITH THE SCHOOLCRAFT LEARNING COMMUNITY'S TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM RELEASE DAY THIS SPRING. HERE STUDENTS INSPECT MACROINVERTEBRATES THEY SAMPLED FROM THE CLEARWATER RIVER.

Education: Many of us supported the Trout in the Classroom program and trout release. We cannot wait to start the cycle back in the fall. This summer, our chapter members will support and assist TUNE (The Ultimate Nature Experience) Camp this July as well. This is a worthy program to support.

You can find and sign up for our volunteer activities by visiting twincitiestu.org and clicking on “events.”

Coming back to fishing, we closed the chapter meeting season with a presentation from Jason Freund, a biology professor from LaCrosse. The professor covered in detail the topic of terrestrial insects and fishing imitations on trout streams. That was a good way to conclude our chapter meetings for the season. I am looking forward to seeing some nice trout pictures to display at our upcoming September chapter meeting. On October 27, we will hold our fourth annual Oktoberfish fundraiser. This is our biggest (and only) fundraising event of the year. Mark your calendar and keep an eye out for more information!

Yves Charron

Win-Cres Chapter

It has been a happy spring for Win-Cres. Two of our members were honored at the Expo. Mark Reisetter, longtime Win-Cres Board member and member of the State Council, received the Thomas Waters Award for Lifetime Achievement. This is the highest honor MNTU can bestow. After receiving his reward, Mark recited Bob Dylan’s “Forever Young” from memory. May it be so, Mark.

Also honored was Joe Lepley, longtime Win-Cres President and benefactor. Joe received the Win-Cres Distinguished Service Award; Joe is, unfortunately, deceased. His sister Victoria Gally traveled from St. Louis with her husband to receive the award on Joe’s behalf. After receiving the award, she read a Native American prayer that had been Joe’s favorite.

Spring is a busy season for outreach. We had our traditional series with the Goodhue Schools Fishing Club. In late March, 15 volunteers traveled to Goodhue to teach skills to 30 kids: reading the water, casting, and fly tying. Three weeks later 50 Goodhue students came to Rushford for a morning of fishing

with 25 guides. Despite cold and blustery weather, the kids caught fish and had a good experience. Over the years, we have taught 350 students to fish for trout.

We were invited to help with the Sheldon Valley Sportsmen’s Club Kids Fishing Contest, held in Sheldon. This event has been going on for 30 years, but was the first time Win-Cres participated. We demonstrated fly casting and tying.

Jacob Kramer, a teacher in the Rushford School System, participated with his students in Trout in the Classroom. Their trout were released into Rush Creek on May 22. This was the first-ever Trout in the Classroom in the Rushford schools.

We also held a trash pickup along a busy Winona Road, gathering six large bags.

Up next will be a presence at the Winona County Fair.

Chuck Shepard



THE WIN-CRES CHAPTER HELD THEIR ANNUAL EVENTS WITH THE GOODHUE SCHOOLS FISHING CLUB THIS SPRING. OVER THE YEARS, WIN-CRES HAS TAUGHT OVER 350 CLUB MEMBERS FLY FISHING SKILLS.

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SELECT POETRY

Driving to Fish By Larry Gavin

The crops appear in hazy rows suggesting
a future of renewed hope. An hour
ago I left a dark house and a sleeping dog
to chase the headlights to drift less waters.
Baptized into this world that seems
to contain only bad news lately. I
wish for so much better, but know control
may not be in my hands. The fish also, I know,
are waiting in paint by number hills calling
like a cardinal in the stream side parking lot.
I pause to erase old thoughts, all bad.
It is the good I fish for. A time to be deliberate
and notice the smallest things that sing
in rough water. Eternal water that has lasted
hundreds of years, but that for me has occupied
a life. Success is measured in what
is inside at days end, and in what tomorrow
seems to hold out as a life.

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.redragonflypress.org



HIAWATHA TU CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS PARTICIPATED IN THEIR ANNUAL TRASH PICKUP ALONG THE ROOT RIVER THIS MAY.