

Newscasts

September, 2004 Serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



We're Back

After a two month hiatus, it is time to resume gathering on the second Tuesday of every month for chapter meetings. The speaker for our September 14th meeting will be DNR fisheries biologist for the Dodgeville area, Gene Van Dyck. Gene will discuss the Willow Creek fish kill that occurred in July. (Please see article below.) Gene has spoken to us in the past, and is always informative, entertaining, and yes, even provocative. Come on out and hear what he has to say about this piscine tragedy.

The meeting will start at 7:01 PM, but many of us will gather around 6 for dinner, and bemusement. Please join us. As is our tradition, we will meet at the *Maple Tree Restaurant* in McFarland. Follow Highway 51 1.5 miles south of the Beltline. You can't miss it. The *Maple Tree* is located at the stoplight in the heart of the McFarland metropolitan area.

Fishkill Wipes Out Willow Creek

Department of Natural Resources biologists are still looking into the cause and long-term impacts of what veteran DNR fisheries biologist Gene Van Dyck described as the "most complete trout kill that I've seen during my 36 years in southwest Wisconsin." Van Dyck said the kill "appears to be virtually complete." Also eliminated were smaller fish such as creek chub, sucker and sculpin, which serve as the food base for trout.

The DNR investigation into the incident is focusing on mishandled spreading of liquid manure. The fish kill was reported to DNR on July 17th. Mr. Van Dyck and his shocking crew found almost 700 dead trout in Willow and Smith Hollow Creeks. Impacted waters include a one third mile stretch of Smith Hollow Creek from its junction with Willow Creek upstream and eleven and three-quarter miles of Willow Creek from its junction with Smith Hollow Creek downstream to about a quarter of a mile above the Village of Ithaca, in Richland County. Shocking surveys on both streams revealed normal populations of trout and other fish in waters upstream of these areas.

Mr. Van Dyck noted that the Willow Creek fishery "was in very good shape, and provided high quality

trout angling." Roughly seven miles of the stream are covered by fishing easements or are under state ownership downstream from the point of kill. Over the years, both streams have been the focus of numerous habitat restoration projects, and Smith Hollow Creek is a major reproductive contributor to Willow Creek's trout population. Van Dyck considers Willow Creek to have been one of the top five trout streams in southwest Wisconsin.

One option for reestablishing a viable trout population is to let *Mother Nature* take its course. This would begin with some adult fish drifting downstream this summer and spawning this fall. Though, trout populations upstream of the impacted waters are normal, there is only a mile of good Class I trout water adjacent to the kill area. The size of the unaffected area adjacent to the devastation severely limits the number of surplus trout available to drift downstream and spawn. "While the number of spawners would be small it would get things started," said Van Dyck. Under this scenario, complete recovery could be six to eight years away.

Another remedy that could speed-up recovery would be human intervention via stocking fish in the impacted waters this fall, "but this would be dependent on having surplus feral (wild) fish at the hatchery or being able to transfer fish from a stream with an excellent population of wild fish into Willow Creek, and those are big question marks," cautioned Van Dyck

Stocking, transfers and proper regulatory protection during the recovery period could accelerate the recovery about two-fold compared to the *let nature take its course scenario*. Mr. Van Dyck emphasized that any discussions on how to begin reestablishing the fishery or enacting special regulations for both waters are "very preliminary."

Quote of the month

Fly fishermen are born honest, but they get over it.
Ed Zern

Black Earth Creek to Benefit from Strategic Land Purchase

Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk has announced the Dane County Conservation Fund program's largest prospective purchase to date. "This purchase meets all the goals of the new Conservation Fund—protecting great natural resources, such as oak woods, wetlands and Black Earth Creek. It provides wonderful opportunities for outdoor recreation and saves some of the most scenic areas along Hwy.14," said Falk.

The Conservation Fund was greatly expanded by Falk following a successful 1999 advisory referendum in which over 75% of county residents voted in favor of spending \$30 million over 10 years to buy lands for parks and open space. The new project protects just under 300 acres west of Middleton, along Highway 14, in the Town of Middleton. The land was being actively marketed for commercial and residential development. The land lies in the Black Earth Creek Resource Area in a critical portion of the watershed that is under extreme development pressure. Lands within the Resource Area boundary include wetlands, riparian stream corridors, prime farmland, natural areas, wooded steep slopes that provide important groundwater recharge and water quality functions, as well as natural ridgelines that define the area and provide a dramatic scenic backdrop.

This unique property exhibits all of these features while providing the opportunity for recreational activities that are easily accessed by a large percentage of Dane County residents. The property runs along Hwy.14, creating aesthetic viewsheds from the highway corridor while also separating the City of Middleton from the rural countryside further west.

"In this project, Dane County cooperated with a potential developer of the property to instead set it aside for preservation. We'll pursue important partnerships with the Town of Middleton, the State of Wisconsin along with the *Natural Heritage Land Trust* and other non-profit organizations in order to give the property the best care and management that is possible."

The children of Randall Swanson, an innovative and entrepreneurial farmer, currently own the property known as the *Sunnyside Seed Farm*, and had received several offers on the property,

but gave Dane County first priority for a potential sale. Swanson, who died in 1998 at the age of 94, had joined the University of Wisconsin faculty as the first farm safety specialist in the country. Much of Swanson's delight in operating *Sunnyside Seed Farm* came from inventing and adapting new and better ways of farming.

Additionally, the *Soleil Development Corporation*, which had previously optioned a large portion of the property, forfeited their contract in order to see the entire property preserved instead.

"I spent a great deal of time on the property while pursuing our purchase contract," says *Soleil Development Corporation* President Joseph Kuhn. "After several visits I realized that this was one property that I didn't want to see houses on, which was our original intent. The views from the property, which extend all the way to Blue Mounds, along with the serenity one feels when walking through its prairies, woods and fields, gave me a great deal of appreciation for its undeveloped state. I contacted the landowner and the County to express my intentions to relinquish my contract and to see the property preserved."

The County proposes to purchase the property in two phases in order to raise funds for the project costs. The County plans to partner with the *Natural Heritage Land Trust*, a local land trust that works to conserve natural areas, agricultural lands, and open spaces in Dane County and the surrounding areas, to apply for State Stewardship dollars and to raise awareness of the project. The first phase contains approximately 73 acres and calls for a purchase price of \$1,765,000 with a closing to occur by year-end. The second phase contains approximately 221 acres and calls for a maximum purchase price of \$3,535,000 with a closing to occur by September of 2005. Both phases will require County Board approval.

Appraisals completed on the property ran as high as \$35,000/acre for the C-2 zoned property and \$32,000/acre for the A-1 zoned property. The county has negotiated a purchase price of \$25,000/acre for the C-2 zoned property and an average of \$16,855/acre for the A-1 zoned property.

High floating dry flies

By John Gribb

Dry flies need some floatant to help them float high and dry. Waterproofing flies *before* you get to the stream works very well and prevents the blob effect (i.e. mess) which can be encountered with on-the-stream application!!

There are products that will help waterproof your flies before you get to the stream. My favorites are *WaterShed* (available in fly shops) and *Scotchgard™ Heavy Duty Water Repellent* spray (green can) found in sporting goods departments. The 3M product is least expensive option. These products are applied to flies and allowed to dry for 24 hours. Tie a dozen flies and place them in a small container and either spray 3M or apply 4-5 drops of the watershed on the bunch. Cover and shake, then let them dry overnight. Another product, *Rainx*, is an alcohol based water repellent found in auto accessories departments that is well suited for use on the stream. After 4-5 fish have gummed your fly...simply apply and blow dry...catch another 5 fish!!

If you use on stream floatants and hate the explosion in hot weather or sluggish flowing in cold weather, then try Aquel by Loon Outdoors ...it stays remarkably consistent throughout the year.

Barbless hooks preserve both the fly and the fish!! Have your wife sew in a 2 x 12 inch strip of terry cloth at the inside top edge of your waders so that you have a handy blotter to blot your fly after you release that fish. Good fishing!!

Token Creek Watershed Association Update

By Jennie Nuese

Have you stopped by the Token Creek Restoration site in the Town of Windsor lately? If you haven't, please take some time this fall to visit the area and check out how the project is progressing. Earlier this summer the DNR notched the berms at the Culver Conservancy trout ponds, allowing the cold-water springs that fed the ponds to drain directly into Token Creek. This has been an exciting first step in the project, as the area not only looks very different, but also because numerous springs previously hidden by the ponds have emerged. Throughout the summer the Watershed Association, the Town of Windsor and interested citizens, many of whom included Trout Unlimited members, spent several Saturdays clearing brush and trees in the conservancy area in order to enable access for the DNR and their equipment.

On another front, this fall TCWA is embarking on a calendar project in which local school children

provide artwork. This project will hopefully lead to more opportunities for the Watershed Association to be involved with the DeForest and Sun Prairie area schools and ensure that our children learn about local watershed issues.

Would you like to know more about what else we are up to? Please visit the Conservancy at 3667 Egge Rd, just north of Hwy 19 at Token Creek. Or join us in membership or as a volunteer: We have numerous hands-on opportunities available, from clearing brush to committee work, and we'd love your help.

For more information on the Token Creek Watershed Association please contact Coordinator Jennie Nuese at 608-334-8941 or email at coordinator@tokencreek.org.

Annual Membership Levels: Rates:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student | \$10.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Sentinel | \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brook Champion | \$35.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Streamkeeper | \$45.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creek Guardian | \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watershed Watchdog | \$250.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Sponsor | \$500.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | \$_____ |

Name

Address

Phone_____

_____ Email_____

- Yes, I would like to receive updates on TCWA activities via email

Comments/Volunteer interests

Please return to: **TCWA PO Box 366 Windsor, WI 53532**

*For more information please contact TCWA Coordinator Jennie Nuese at 608-334-8941

From the President

By Sue Fey

A handful of odd and wonderful things happened this summer along the Black Earth Creek watershed.

A developer stood at the brow of a handsome ridge overlooking the pastoral valley below and declared it too pretty to develop. (Feel free to read that sentence again. I'll wait.) The heirs to this lovely 300 acre farm agreed and walked away from several million dollars in potential profit, as they negotiated with the Dane County Conservation Fund to purchase and preserve the land.

A farmer, evaluating his retirement options, sought the counsel of the *Natural Heritage Land Trust* and decided to sell them the development rights to his 215 acres. Ever heard of such a thing? I hadn't. It means the NHLT now holds, and will always hold, the development rights to this land. (And they are an organization dedicated to the conservation of natural areas and open space, so it's in good hands.) The farmer still owns his farm, and is comfortably facing his future. Your TU chapter thought this was such a great idea, we agreed to help with the fundraising for NHLT, and are matching a \$5,000 pledge.

A neighboring farmer, facing similar challenges, attempted to have some of his prime farmland along the stream corridor rezoned from agricultural to residential so he could develop two large parcels. The Dane County Board denied this request, after lengthy debate over personal and public rights. In doing so, they underscored the lesson that development is not always the best, or the only way to realize potential property value.

All of us who fish for trout or simply care about the rural landscape and its' intrinsic value owe a debt of gratitude to these pioneers in land conservation. Take a moment to imagine how this lovely valley might have looked by next trout season without them.

Spring Creek Festival Update

The *Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter of Trout Unlimited* will hold their *Spring Creek Festival* on Saturday, September 11, 2004. This will be an informal gathering of fly fishers and others interested in the cold water resources of the Driftless Area. The annual festival creates a venue for all fly fishers to meet and share their wide variety of interests, skills, and concerns related to the sport of fly fishing and to support preservation,

restoration, and use of Southwestern Wisconsin's spring creek fisheries and watersheds.

On Saturday, there will be programs on fishing, fly tying, rod building, casting, and other activities related to fishing the spring creeks of the area. The featured speakers are Rich Osthoff and Jim Bartelt. Rich is the author of *Fly Fishing the Rocky Mountain Backcountry* and *No Hatch to Match: Aggressive Strategies for Fly Fishing Between Hatches*. Jim Bartelt has been an Orvis recommended guide for the past 14 years. His specialty is guiding for trout on the Spring Creeks of Southwest Wisconsin. Jim is also a member of the *Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited*.

There will be a number of very nice bucket raffle prizes, and a Resale Tent. A special raffle will give attendees an opportunity to win a bamboo fly rod built and donated by Paul Douglas. All proceeds from the event will be used to fund project work on Southwest Wisconsin trout streams.

Participants are invited to either camp on festival grounds or book accommodations in one of the area hotels, motels, or bed and breakfasts. Camping fees are \$7.00 per night. The campground can accommodate tents, campers and motor home.

For more information about the *Spring Creek Festival*, please call Dave Fritz at (608) 943-8454, Bill Weege at (608)753-2332, Sarah Botham at (608)924-2625 or, see the Harry and Laura Nohr Trout Unlimited website (<http://www.nohrtu.org>).

The Ice Breaker Is Coming!

Please mark January 14th and 15th 2005 on your calendars – the 2005 *Ice Breaker* is on its way. Our speakers will be Seth Norman and Bill Shogren. Mr. Norman is the author of *The Fly Fisher's Guide to Crimes of Passion*, and *Meanderings of a Fly Fisherman*. Both books are wonderful works of prose. If you like Gierach, then you will love Norman. Mr. Shogren is coauthor of *Wisconsin and Minnesota Trout Streams: A Fly-Angler's Guide* and is a very active member of a TU chapter in the Twin Cities.

The *Ice Breaker* is an annual event and serves as the major fundraiser for our chapter. It features seminars by renowned experts, bucket raffles, door prizes, fly tying demonstrations, chili, and a lot of fun. The proceeds are used to fund our coldwater restoration efforts. Veteran *Ice Breaker* attendees will surely agree that this is probably the most fun that can be had (legally) while raising money.

We Had A Great Meeting in July



The July Chapter meeting & picnic was a big hit. Scot Stewart and Kurt Welke provided the entertainment/edification/humiliation. The dynamic duo brought their electro-fishing gear, and performed an unofficial trout census on a section of Garfoot Creek that was the focus of numerous SWTU workdays in 2003. The entertainment came from seeing such marvelous fish. The edification came from noting the types of places where these leviathans like to hang out. If you weren't humbled by the difference between electrofishing yields and those obtained by most of us with rod and reel, then

you will never know the meaning of humiliation. As always, it was awe inspiring.

The electro-shocking demonstration was followed by our annual chapter picnic. Chef Mark Rhinerson may have outdone himself this year. His brats were delicious (as always), but his baked whistle berries were superb. Demand for the latter was so high that those returning to gorge themselves on seconds were disappointed to face the clean bottom of an empty pan. He must have had a secret ingredient this year. Hearty thanks are owed to all who made this event a success.

Important dates to remember:

September 14	Chapter Meeting featuring DNR Fisheries Biologist Gene Van Dyck
October 12	Chapter Meeting featuring Dane County Executive & SWTU member Kathleen Falk
November 9	Chapter Meeting
December 14	Chapter Meeting
January 11	Chapter Meeting featuring Fly Tying Demonstrations by SWTU Members
January 14 & 15	Ice Breaker featuring Seth Norman and Bill Shogren

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