

Newscasts

March, 2005 Serving the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited



March Madness Auction

Ladies and gentlemen, it's time once again for the *Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited March Madness Auction*. Yes, boys and girls it is time to loosen your wallet, and head for the *Maple Tree Restaurant* prepared to buy some cool stuff while supporting your TU chapter. Now is the time to sort through your fishing equipment and identify a few things that you haven't used lately (ever?). Bring it to the auction. All of that extra stuff makes it look like you have too much angling paraphernalia and it can damage your credibility while you're trying to convince the *Chief Financial Officer* of the household that you *need* a new fly rod.

While you are sorting, you may find one of those misguided gifts from Aunt Winifred (who wouldn't have known a fish hook had she been impaled by an errant backcast). So, get that crap out of your house. Donate it to the auction and perhaps you will create some joy where there was only bitter disappointment. A lot guys donate cool stuff too. Flies are always welcome. Camping, fishing or hunting gear of all types - even gently blemished road-kill can fetch a buck or two. Whatever you bring to the auction, our crooked crew of auctioneers will surely turn into cash.

The auctioneer "services" of Colonel Muskrat, Dr. Sausage, and Sven Svenson have been secured once again. These guys may be sleazy, but they are good for the chapter coffers and a chuckle. They will sell anything to anyone, so pay attention. It's all in fun, and it is for a great cause. The *March Madness Auction* is our "other" fundraiser, and proceeds from it are used to support local coldwater conservation efforts.

Please join us for bargains and a fun-filled evening. Dinner and a swap meet will begin about 6:00 PM. The auction will start at 7:03 PM. As always, we will meet at the *Maple Tree Restaurant* on Highway 51 just past the *second* stop light in beautiful downtown McFarland.

Chapter Award Nominations

There are a lot of hard working volunteers in our chapter, and recognizing their efforts with an award is a great way to acknowledge our appreciation. Do you know someone that should be recognized this way? Give it some thought. All chapter members are eligible to make award nominations. If you have someone in mind, please contact Sue Fey or John Strauss as soon as possible. Our annual chapter awards presentation will be held as a part of our April 12th chapter meeting.

Chapter Elections to be Held April 12

If you or someone you know would like to serve on the board of directors for the *Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited*, you should make contact Sue Fey real soon. A slate of nominees is being assembled, and the elections are scheduled for April 12th. Though it is never too late to make a nomination, the process tends to run more smoothly when nominations are made in advance of the election. Though the nominating committee is especially interested in finding candidates that have previous non-profit board of director experience, and/or fundraising experience, they will warmly welcome anyone willing to serve.

SWTU at Canoecopia

Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited will host a booth at *Canoecopia*. This year's event will run from March 11th through March 13th at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison. Volunteers are needed to help staff an exhibit table. Fly-tyers, talkers, paddlers, and yarn casting demonstrators are also needed.

Please contact Don Golembiewski at either (608)-231-3398, or don@hadley.edu to volunteer your services.

TU Work Crew Testimonial

By John Guzowski

When I joined Trout Unlimited my first year dues were free, courtesy of Hodgman. Like most first year members, I suppose, I attended a few meetings trying to figure out why I was there. While winning a "You Must be Present to Win" raffle certainly encouraged my attendance at monthly meetings (thank you, Fontana), the watershed event in my participation in TU was signing up for a stream habitat improvement work crew, Tom Ehlert's so called "Corps of Recovery."

Prior to this event I had read TU's charter and right at the top of the list is improving trout habitat. And while you may argue whether what the Corps of Recovery does is improvement, the work is certainly well-intended, being lead by people who live with the resource, and undertaken with the advice and consent of the best informed experts in the field (Wisconsin DNR). So I have tried to live up to TU's charter and have participated in most of the work days. Doing so has brought me a better understanding of TU's purpose, the habitat problems of local trout streams, and an Orvis fly rod.

While a dollar value can be placed on TU dues, a raffle gift certificate, and a new fly rod; I consider my time with the work crews priceless, not because I value my time so highly but because I no longer have to ask myself why I am there. So I would encourage all TU members to attend the monthly meetings (some of the speakers lately have been world class in quality) and sign up for the work crews. I would especially encourage new members to do so (as if free raffle tickets weren't enough incentive). If you have construction or logging experience, so much the better. Every time you show up for a work day, your name goes into a drawing for fly line, reels, and if you're as lucky as I was, a fly rod; not to mention you'll be well fed and seldom thirsty.

The need for your participation in TU is there and your help is needed. Hopefully, at this time next year you'll feel the same as I do – that you are the luckiest guy alive to belong to TU.

Corps of Recovery to Begin Season IV

March 26 has been designated as the first work day of the Corps of Recovery's fourth expeditionary season. We'll begin our adventures on Mt. Vernon Creek. The start-time will be 8:30 AM. We'll meet at the park shelter in Mt. Vernon and car-pool from that point to locations downstream where off-road parking is minimal, and/or excessive on-shoulder parking could prove a traffic hazard. Lunch will be served afterwards at the shelter.

Prospective participants are asked to call Tom Ehlert at 767 - 2413 so that he may know how much food to prepare.

Ribbon Flash Material

By John Gribb

The holidays are a good time to find unique fly tying materials. After Christmas sales often yield fly tying materials at rock bottom prices! Santa beards, angle hair, tinsels, and especially flashy holiday ribbons can make fabulous flies.

Various ribbons used to wrap presents make extraordinarily good flash material for ribbing dry flies, tying large streamers, woolly buggers, and bass poppers. Look at the cut ends of flashy silver, gold, or holographic, ribbons to see if the desired fibers run length wise. Cut the ribbon edges off and you can peel single or multiple strands of tying material from the edges. Note that the remaining clear short ribbon fibers make great tails for dry flies! Be eager to visit a craft/sewing center with your spouse and look through the ribbon section. Imagine 15 feet of a 40 strand bundle (enough for 1,000 flies) of silver flash for \$3.50!! Regardless of the cost most ribbon material can handle a lot of abuse, and it does not stretch like much of the traditional flash available for fly tying. One gold ribbon I found has a very fine strand ideal for ribbing size 24 midges, another ribbon in silver is ideal for long tailed pike/bass flies/poppers as it does not seem to tangle. Other tinsel-like ribbons in red, green, blue, and yellow are ideal for tying humpies, or Wulff patterns. This could be great stuff for salmon and salt water flies.

Please send questions of ideas for future articles to John at JGribb@mhtc.net

County Land Use Initiative Asks “What Lands Should be Conserved”?

By Bill Pielsticker

Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk invites all county residents to take part in an effort to identify areas in Dane County that should be protected from development, thereby also identifying areas where development might be appropriate. Called *Attain Dane*, this new initiative is inviting public comment at a series of listening sessions as well as on line.

At each working session, Falk will display maps that show the growth that will take place under the planning done by each municipality in that region. This combined growth will consume much more land than most people expect. The goal of *Attain Dane* is to find better ways to plan development in the county while protecting key natural resources, and share tax revenues with areas that forgo development.

Major points of Attain Dane! include:

- At mapping working sessions, citizens and local government leaders will tell Falk their priorities for preservation and development. After the six working sessions, Falk will create a county-wide map identifying areas to protect and areas where development can occur.
- The areas designated for preservation (large tracts of farmland and natural areas) would be protected through a transfer of development rights (TDR) program.
- A system of tax base sharing and intergovernmental agreements will be implemented, to share the benefits of development and to reduce competition for development among municipalities.

Falk also has convened a work group to develop a Transfer of Development Rights policy for the county and its municipalities.

Initial listening sessions have occurred in Sun Prairie and Cross Plains. Future listening sessions are scheduled for Oregon (March 9th), DeForest (March 30th), Verona (April 27th), and Madison (May 18th). All of the listening sessions begin at 7PM. For a list of locations, or to review the material for the listening sessions and to comment online, go to <http://www.co.dane.wi.us/> and follow the links to *Attain Dane*.

Token Creek Watershed Association to Hold Spring Forum and Annual Meeting

The Token Creek Watershed Association will hold its 9th Annual Spring Forum and Annual Meeting on March 14th at the Town of Burke Town Hall.

This year's forum, “Protecting the Token Creek Watershed through Community Planning,” will focus on how local municipality's master plans are protecting the health of the Token Creek Watershed. Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk will present the keynote address, followed by a panel discussion with representatives from the Towns of Burke, Bristol, and Windsor, the Village of DeForest and the City of Sun Prairie. This promises to be an evening of lively discussion and education on the protection of one of our area's greatest natural resources, Token Creek and its surrounding watershed.

The Burke Town Hall is located at 5365 Reiner Rd. Doors open at 6:00 pm for refreshments and the program will begin at 7:00 pm. This event is free and open to the public. For more information please contact TCWA at 608-334-8941 or visit their website at www.tokencreek.org.

February Meeting Recap



Former Black Hawk TU chapter president Dave Patrick gave a very nice presentation on fishing the Missouri River. A couple of his fishing “buddies” were also on hand to keep him honest. Thanks Dave!

Manure kills more than 100 trout

By Ron Seely - Wisconsin State Journal

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Manure running off a frozen farm field has killed more than 100 brown trout in the Sugar River's West Branch, a stream that was just removed in October from the federal government's list of impaired waters.

More than \$900,000 in federal and state grants and thousands of hours of volunteer labor had turned the shallow and muddy stream into a prized trout fishery.

But a farmer's decision last week to spread liquid cow manure on an icy field has caused considerable damage to that effort, officials said Monday.

"One landowner making a poor decision may have undone 30 years of work in this watershed," said Frank Fetter, executive director of the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association.

The Department of Natural Resources is considering legal action against the farmer and refused to release his name because of its investigation. David Wood, a DNR conservation warden, said the farmer may have violated a state law that forbids introducing a pollutant to waterways. The farmer, Wood said, would be subject to a fine of about \$430 and restitution costs of about \$26 per trout.

By late Monday, DNR workers had recovered more than 100 dead trout, some of them as long as 19 inches and perhaps 7- or 8-years-old, from the cold stream. But Kurt Welke, a DNR fish biologist, said that number is expected to increase dramatically. He said many dead fish remain on the bottom of the stream or stuck beneath banks and won't surface until they begin to decompose.

The steep field on which the manure was spread is near Highway 78 and Blue Valley Road in the town of Blue Mounds, south of Mount Horeb. Welke and Wood both said the farmer is cooperating in the cleanup effort and is among the landowners who worked on efforts to restore the Sugar.

The manure, Welke said, was spread on the field late last week by a contract manure spreader hired by the farmer. But the spreader did not work the manure into the ground because it was too frozen. A thaw Friday caused the manure to run into the stream, according to Michael Sorge,

a DNR water resource specialist who was on the scene at the time.

The fish were killed not by the lack of oxygen, as happens during the warm summer months, but by ammonia from the manure, Sorge said.

A major worry, Welke said, is that much of the manure remains on the frozen ground and another thaw may send the rest of it running downhill into the stream.

"If there is a gradual warm-up in temperature," Welke said, "then there may be a chronic, but lesser amount of manure discharging to the river. A quick jump in temperature may spell trouble in that a major slug could impact the river."

Workers spent the weekend constructing earthen berms in the field to hold back the flow of manure in the event of a thaw. And today, Sorge said, heavy construction equipment is being used to break through the frozen surface of the field to allow the manure to work into the soil.

Such runoff pollution, also called nonpoint pollution, is a vexing problem, even though an ambitious law was passed two years ago to help control the problem. But a lack of money has crippled that law. Plus, critics point out that farmers are required to install erosion-control practices only if they are provided cost-sharing dollars - money that isn't available at the levels expected.

Welke said this spill highlights another more immediate problem - that of farmers spreading manure on frozen ground. It's a common and legal practice, Welke said, but remains an enormous environmental problem. He said the agency has received a number of complaints about the practice this winter.

"It seems to me," Welke said, "that it's time to have a frank discussion between the agricultural community and the regulatory community about certain practices that have long been viewed as normal. We cannot winter spread manure."

Welke added that alternatives do exist. Perhaps, he said, there should be a regional digester where farmers can haul their manure in the winter.

"I would certainly hope that the high profile of this raises the eyebrows of my administrators and also of the legislative community," Welke added.

Sugar River Fish Kill Update

By Kurt Welke

Friends – I am writing after a rather full day of trying to make sense out of the fish kill on the West Branch of the Sugar River. You probably have many questions in need of answers. Thus I write to fill you in as best the circumstances allow me, and to begin a dialogue on what should be done next.

First, allow me to provide a brief recounting of the facts. On Thursday February 24, one of our staff observed that quite a bit of liquid manure had been spread on fields “uphill” of the West Branch Sugar River. This is the very stream that was recently removed from the 303D “Impaired Waters” list. Tremendous quantities of time and money were invested in this stream in order to restore a fine and upcoming trout stream.

Thursday afternoon, DNR staff thought better of the warm weather and took a quick tour to comfort our suspicions. We discovered that a strong and steady discharge of manure was traveling quickly towards conduit ditches that would soon join a tributary and be directed rapidly into the West Branch. Three fields where land spreading had occurred were causing problems. Steep slopes, frozen ground, and quickly rising temperatures had combined to mobilize the manure over a distance of more than a mile. What began as a benign and routine disposal of manure had become a very serious and difficult situation in the course of a few hours. I would opine the waste hauler exercised poor judgment given these conditions.

We contacted the farmer and conceived a set of stop-gap actions to abate the problem as best as time, weather, and landscape allowed. Let me stress that the farmer was extremely cooperative and positive. He had himself spent time building LUNKERS for this project and was as disappointed by the problems as staff and neighbors were.

On Thursday, DNR staff began our usual protocol of water sampling, photographic documentation, communication with necessary staff and investigation. By the end of the day, no manure had passed into the West Branch; however, manure was in a tributary and flowing towards the stream. Dropping temperatures on Thursday night were slowing delivery, but the waste load was mobile. On Friday, two containment dikes were constructed and the larger threat of the most uphill sources was largely held in check. However, the melting that occurred on Friday had further mobilized large volumes of manure and a steady inflow of manure was documented. We searched for dead fish on Friday at two locations proximal to the discharge but observed none.

Saturday, DNR staff continued water sampling and spot checking for dead fish, but found none. Local residents recovered four dead trout near the bridge at CTH G on Saturday afternoon. DNR Staff returned to the river on Sunday and walked three separate stream segments. Members of the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association also assisted with the inspection. By Sunday dusk, we had recovered 98 fish from approx 4-5 miles of the stream.

Many more dead fish were discovered over the course of the next few days. An electroshocking survey indicated that a stretch of stream which recently held a healthy distribution of fish from at least 6 year classes, now held only fish of nine inches or less. The larger and older fish seem to have suffered the effects of the spill more than the smaller fish.

A few KEY points:

- What the farmer did was not illegal. While it lacked recognition of the consequence, it was not malicious, pre-meditated or done with an “attitude”.
- The detection of this spill was serendipitous. DNR staff acted on a hunch, and managed to be in the right place at the right time. Similar manure runoff was undoubtedly occurring elsewhere.
- Though the spreading occurred a long way from water, the steep slopes and frozen ground created conditions that were unacceptable for the spreading of liquid waste. Nothing short of NOT SPREADING would have prevented this fish kill

Regrettable as this is, it is a perfect example of why we need corrective actions once and for all. We need effective legislation that will address the risks attendant to the spreading of liquid manure. Milk cannot trump fish. Healthy streams can coexist within a healthy agricultural community, but only if there is recognition on the part of agricultural interests that sensible rules must be developed and adhered to.

This has now become a highly charged political situation. DATCP, your representatives, and DNR all need to be told in NO UNCERTAIN TERMS, that this is not acceptable and that a ban on winter spreading of liquid manure is necessary to protect the public interest. I strongly encourage you to be vocal and weigh in on this issue. If we can't capitalize on this opportunity to correct a major threat to Wisconsin waters, then I don't know what it takes to effect a positive change.

Fish Kills and Budgets; Farms and Streams

Opinion by Bill Pielsticker, Council Chair

The fish kill on the Upper Sugar River highlights why Wisconsin TU is making a full court press on the issue of funding for the polluted runoff rules. We are supporting the Governor's request for an additional \$2 million for cost share and county personnel to help implement the program on the ground. Even with the additional funds, the proposed budget falls far short of fully funding the program.

It's a fact that most Wisconsin trout streams flow through farm fields. Many of these fields receive annual loads of manure as a source of nutrients. In recent years, many livestock producers and dairy operators have converted their manure handling from daily hauling of fresh manure to storing it for months at a time, then spreading it on fields as a liquid before or after the planting season.

Traditional "solid" manure may be spread on frozen ground with little likelihood that large volumes will flow off the field. That isn't the case with the liquid variety. In the recent incident, frozen soil on steep slopes combined with warm temperatures to move large volumes of manure over a mile into the stream. Under current rules, the manure spreading may have been ill-advised but it was not illegal.

Following an incident like this, or the fish kill on Willow Creek in Iowa County last summer, it is all too easy to blame the farmer. In fact, in both cases the farmer is known to care about the stream. In fact, the landowner involved in the Sugar River incident was building LUNKER structures for a stream project last summer.

So if the farmer isn't to blame, who or what is? Following the fish kill on the Willow, Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Secretary Rod Nilsestuen noted that "if this is the result of standard operating procedures, we have a problem." Indeed, the problem appears to be that to have modern animal agriculture in this state *and* healthy streams,

we need to change some standard operating procedures.

What will this take? It may require new regulations, such as banning winter spreading of liquid manure, or requiring liquid manure to be injected or incorporated within 24 hours. However, such a change will be expensive for producers to implement, and will require use of federal and scarce state dollars. At the same time, this would only address the most acute symptoms of a larger problem – polluted runoff.

We already have a program to address polluted runoff. This is the set of rules adopted three years ago, following years of contentious hearings and posturing and compromise. The rules are among the best in the country, but they can't accomplish much without adequate cost share funding to enable producers to address the source of the problem. This is why we support the Governor's proposal to increase funding for controlling agricultural runoff.

It is time for the DNR, DATCP, agricultural producers, anglers, and other stream users to get together and find some solutions to the issue of acute stream pollution from animal manure. Meanwhile, the legislature at a minimum should approve the Governor's request for more money to address the runoff from winter snowmelt and summer storms that continues to degrade water quality of streams throughout the state. With these two steps, we may be able to see a future where farms and streams can share the landscape to the benefit of all our citizens.

Mark Your Calendars Now

The 2006 Ice Breaker has been scheduled for January 20th and 21st 2006. The keynote speaker will be Kelly Galloup. ESPN fans will recognize Kelly as the star of numerous Saturday morning fly fishing shows. He has also authored an acclaimed book on fishing streamers.

We are still looking for a second speaker of local fame and interest. We don't know who that person is yet, but you can rest assured that it will be a good choice.

From the President

By Sue Fey

The frost is in the cornfield and the manure is on the move... I won't send you into a stupor with more fish-kill data. I do, however, want to underscore how critical it is that Trout Unlimited, (that would be YOU) stands front and center when the DNR and Ag codes come up for public comment later this Spring. I will be there, and it'll be a lot more fun if 20 or 30 of you join me. The other 630 of you can call or write letters! It may sound a bit tedious, but it beats a day of fishing over a lifeless stream.

I will now confess that I am currently suffering from a severe bout of writers block. There are a half dozen important trout issues finning around in my head, none of which I understand in sufficient detail to present from start to finish. I spent part of the afternoon on the phone with the Gaming Commission, sorting out the intricacies of the raffle license issues for the chapter. Believe me, that won't make scintillating copy, but it prompted me to spend twenty minutes trying to visualize where I last saw my fishing license. (I think that it's on my fly tying table.)

I spent two hours staffing the entrance to the Fishing Expo last weekend in the company of a Muskie fisherman. He had this wisdom to share, "the first fisherman who tells a lie, doesn't stand a chance". I'm going to wrap this up now, before I reveal anything truly alarming about my mental status.

It's March. In three days, we can wade back into the icy streams and marvel that we survived another closed season. In my case, apparently, it was a close call.

Spring Confluence

In lieu of an annual dinner, and silent auction, The *River Alliance of Wisconsin* has cooked up an exciting event. They are bringing together river folk for fun and fellowship for an event that they are calling the *Spring Confluence*.

The event will feature River Champion Awards, insights from author Victoria Houston, a bucket raffle for boats, bikes, trips, a BAMBOO FLY Rod, and other great prizes.

Victoria Houston is the author of several fly fishing murder mysteries that are set in the northwoods of Wisconsin against a background of fishing and fly fishing. Her heroine is police chief who is also an ardent fly fisherman. With the help of a retired dentist, she solves murders. In Loon Lake- the home of a guide and champion loon-caller who wears an earflap leather cap topped by an enormous stuffed trout.

The event is scheduled to occur on Saturday March 19th, 2005 from 7-9:30 p.m. More information is available on the River Alliance website: <http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/>

Cabin Fever Days in Menasha

Fox Valley Trout Unlimited's *Cabin Fever Day* is scheduled for March 19 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Waverly Beech (near Menasha). Headliners Craig Mathews and Darrell Toliver will discuss: saltwater fishing, fishing in southwest Montana, and fly fishing for bass and muskie. There will be raffles, silent auctions, bucket raffles, fly tying, rod building, vendors and factory reps. For more information, contact Jim Oates at (920)915-8884, Tony Trembl at (920) 830-2333, or visit their website at www.FoxValleyTU.org

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Important dates to remember:

March 5 Early Trout Season Opens
March 8 *March Madness* Auction
March 11-13 Canoecopia at the Alliant Energy Center
March 19 Fox Valley TU Cabin Fever Day at Waverly Beach
March 19 River Alliance of Wisconsin Spring Confluence Event at the Overture Center
March 26 Corps of Recovery Workday on Mt. Vernon Creek
April 11 DNR Spring Hearings and Conservation Congress Meeting
March 29 Deadline for April Newscasts Article Submissions
April 12 Monthly Chapter Meeting featuring Mike Miller, chapter elections & awards
April 14 Token Creek Watershed Association Spring Forum
April 16 Casting Clinic
April 23 Black Earth Creek Cleanup Day
May 10 Monthly Chapter Meeting
May 14 Open Meeting of the SWTU Board of Directors in Avalanche, WI
June 11 Special Needs Fishing Day