



2024 Spring Newsletter



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Message From Council Chairman – Jim Wilson

This newsletter we focus on the second of TU's three organizational goals, which is: Inspire a diverse corps of staff, volunteers, and partners to advocate for and participate in the care and recovery of our lands and waters. Our objectives now are Community Engagement first, followed by Conservation and Advocacy.

Information sharing from TU chapters in other states provide some insight into planning activities that attract a younger more diverse membership. A chapter in Washington State that had been struggling, changed from a monthly meetings model to one where they only hold 2 meetings per year, and these are mostly "planning" meetings where members are asked to volunteer to plan a single event. Events are held on weekends, for the most part, and focus on family-friendly activities. This gets more people involved with chapter activities and keeps the workload manageable for the event planners.

This suggests the need for a changing chapter model. The old model is President-centric and relies on a small number of Officers and Board members to plan monthly chapter meetings.

The new model has limited regular meetings, and a lighter lift for the members who are involved with planning events. The new model has an Events group that develops and implements plans for new activities. One chapter in Colorado has 8 new activities scheduled for 2024. That chapter has “groups” or “activities” rather than committees. Think also about where we can partner larger chapters with smaller ones for events. In one example, the Mianus (Connecticut) chapter has helped sponsor film tours in 3 other nearby areas.

Some best practice Event examples from some of our Virginia TU chapters: Adaptive Anglers on the Fly dates to a 2003 Eagle Scout project (Thomas Jefferson chapter). Since then, the TJ chapter has partnered with the local nonprofit Therapeutic Adventures to keep it running annually for 20 years, giving a vital space for anglers with disabilities to come together and cast lines into the nearby trout streams, which are among the region’s best. Anglers are paired with TU chapter members for this fun fishing event.

Tree plantings are always a good way to give back to your local community and do not require you to have a trout fishery within your chapter boundaries. For example, the Northern VA Chapter joined with a local partner this spring for a live stake planting. This event was held at Flat Lick, Placid Lake Court in Chantilly. This chapter also volunteers to assist with three Kids Fishing Days in the area at local ponds that are stocked with trout. All it takes is a set of nippers (or just nail clippers) to assist these kids in catching their first trout.

The Smith River chapter in Southern VA partners with the US Army Corps of Engineers and Fallen Outdoors to teach fly tying to Military Service members and Veterans. This class is held the last Saturday of each month at the Philpott Dam. The class is limited to 12 participants and goes from March-October.

The **Beaver Creek Invitational** flyfishing tournament for veterans is an annual event sponsored by the Massanutten Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Flyfishing has a therapeutic effect and is an effective treatment for combat veterans who have PTSD. The BCI introduces veterans to the relaxing pleasures of flyfishing by providing veterans with equipment and instruction from an experienced flyfishing guide while fishing the waters of Beaver Creek. The daylong event begins in the morning with casting instructions for inexperienced anglers. After breakfast, ten teams of guided veterans’ fish the 2 ½ mile length of the Beaver Creek special regulation area, competing for prizes for the largest, most, and smallest fish.



The veterans enjoy a streamside lunch with a hot sandwich and homemade potato salad while relaxing in the shade of a large tent. The keynote speaker, frequently with a military background, thanks the veterans for their service. Previous speakers included Dr. Peter Brookes, Senior Fellow for National Security Affairs and a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense under President George W. Bush, and Mr. Ray Maddox, a highly decorated Navy Seal with combat experience in Iraq and Afghanistan.



After lunch, a second round of fly fishing occurs for the veterans while chapter members prepare for the evening barbeque, select award winners, and distribute door prizes. The generous support of Shenandoah Valley merchants ensures that all the participants receive prizes and excellent food.

National Leadership Council Notes -Eric Tichay

TU Southeast Regional Rendezvous
March 15-17, 2024

The TU Southeast Regional Rendezvous was held March 15-17 at the Holiday Inn Nashville-Vanderbilt, Nashville, Tennessee. The hotel and event site were located near Vanderbilt University in the shadow of the university's stadium.

Virginia was well represented at the event by four participants: Tony Hill, Northern Virginia Chapter; Tom Benzing, Massanutten Chapter; and Danny Newman, and Eric Tichay, Smith River Chapter.



Friday, March 15

The meeting schedule began on Friday with hosted fishing in the morning and early afternoon followed by an "Iron Fly" fly tying competition from 4:00-7:00 p.m.

Regrettably heavy rains from the previous day shut down trout fishing on the West Fork Stones River at the Nice Mill Dam Recreation Area. Danny and I ended up fishing at Shelby Park Lake, Nashville where we practiced fly casting skills. Danny caught one sunfish. One angler

fishing with corn bait caught a limit of stocked trout.

The "Iron Fly" competition was held across the street from the hotel at the Cumberland Transit, an outdoor enthusiast shop. Iron Fly is a friendly fly tying competition where fly tyers create a fly limited only by their imagination utilizing only specified materials given at the beginning of the event. Participants have an allotted time to create and deliver their creation to the judges. Each participant was awarded a new TU camo cap.



Photo by Maggie Heumann

Saturday, March 16

On Saturday, after a hearty breakfast and warm welcome by the Tennessee Council, event participants attended the opening meeting by Abigail McQueen, Mid Atlantic Coldwater Habitat Program Director, Eastern Region. Abigail gave the group an informative presentation titled; Southeast Conservation: Our Growing Impact.

After a break, participants split up into smaller groups to attend 12 informative breakout sessions held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Breakout sessions were split into four periods with three sessions for each period.

Breakout sessions covered varied conservation and sustainment topics that included many Trout Unlimited functions. For example, I attended the following four sessions.

- 1) DEI Workgroup of the National Leadership Council Practitioner's Circle, hosted by Robert Allen – DEI Workgroup Leadership Circle and Stefan Jackson – Natural Difference, LLC.
- 2) Alabama Brook Trout: Understanding More About the Red Eyed Bass, hosted by Matt Lewis, Native Fish Coalition. (Red Eyed bass conservation techniques are similar to trout conservation.)
- 3) Illuminating Hotspots of Imperiled Aquatic Biodiversity in the Southeastern U.S., presented by Dr. Bernie Kuhajda, Tennessee Aquarium.

4) Bugs 101 (Fly Fishing Entomology). Presented by Maggie Heumann, TU Manager of Volunteer Operations and Entomologist.

Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) Barriers

“Where a Trout Stream Goes Under the Road”

Thomas R. Benzing, VCTU Conservation Coordinator

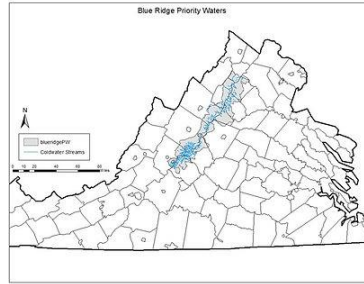
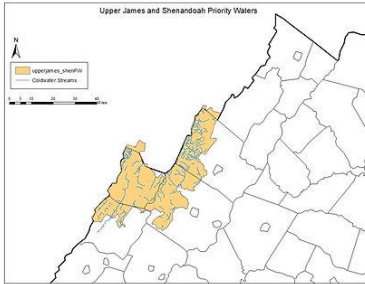
On our trout streams in Virginia, barriers like dams and road culverts reduce available habitat. These barriers to movement, upstream and downstream, cause problems when trout seek deeper waters during a drought or better spawning grounds. They don't just affect trout, however, and are more generally known as aquatic organism passage (AOP) barriers. Currently, there are funds to replace or remove AOP barriers but one of the main challenges is identifying which ones deserve higher priority for these efforts.

Not all stream barriers are created equally. Some road culverts have large dropoffs at their downstream end that require trout to jump if they want to go upstream. Even if trout can find their way into the culvert, they often find it difficult to fight the flow or simply don't like the experience of swimming into a dark hole for fear of predators. Without assessing the conditions for these AOP barriers, we don't know which ones to address first. According to Abby McQueen, TU's Mid Atlantic Coldwater Habitat Program Director, there are “15,000 unassessed stream crossings in the Southern Appalachians.”

VCTU is exploring the idea of a citizen science program to assess AOP barriers on trout streams in our Priority Waters Areas. (For more information about Priority Waters Areas, see the VCTU website). One model for involving volunteers in assessing AOP barriers is a program in Tennessee. To survey barriers in the Smoky Mountains National Park, volunteers in the Little River Chapter received training from Jeff Wright, TU's Southern Appalachian Project Manager. Once trained, teams of 3-4 volunteers follow maps provided by Jeff to stream crossings on public roads and conduct surveys. These surveys include making lots of measurements, including culvert drop height, and taking pictures to document and rate the severity of the barrier. All this information goes into a national database hosted in our region by the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP). Now, it's available to natural resource agencies through SARP as an online tool for mapping and prioritizing these AOP barriers. So far, Little River Chapter volunteers have surveyed 239 barriers and that's directing efforts in the Smokies to replace them as part of routine road maintenance projects.

We could do something similar in Virginia, but it would require training volunteers and then directing their efforts to areas most in need of assessment. If you are interested in learning more, check out the SARP maps at southeastaquatics.net where you may find AOP barriers on your favorite trout stream where it goes under the road. For barriers that are unassessed, you could be the one to survey it as the first step to getting it replaced or removed.

Priority Waters – Burr TupperIn Virginia, a team of volunteers from our chapters are working in two of the three recommended areas as Priority Waters: Blue Ridge/Massanutten and Upper James—Shenandoah with the Grayson Highlands deferred at this time,



The work is just beginning. Working groups for each of the current priority waters areas have started meeting to explore specific water bodies that have restoration and conservation opportunities, develop criteria for prioritizing those areas interest, determining the conservation actions needed, and developing a strategic plan for those areas,

In summary, we are off to a solid start, but there is a lot of work to be done. If you have an interest in being directly engaged with the Priority Waters committee and sub-committees, please let your Chapter or Council leadership know.

Virginia Council Educational Grant Program – Burr Tupper

Grant Program Overview

The Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited has acquired a sum of funds that were previously in possession of the Tri-State Conservation & Fishing Camp, which has been disbanded. It is the desire of the Executive Committee of the Tri-State Camp that those funds be used for programs that support the Trout Unlimited “STREAM of Engagement” programs, specifically to increase participation in conservation and fishing by young people from elementary to college age. To support the mission the following steps are required to secure a grant.

Eligibility

1. The maximum grant is \$3000 per annum.
2. Applicants have 12 calendar months to complete the project.
3. No TU member of the requesting chapter receiving grant funds will benefit in any way financially from the award.
4. All projects must be submitted and sponsored by a Virginia TU chapter.

VCTU will not fund:

1. Salaries for government agency personnel or non-profit staff.
2. Advocacy campaigns.
3. More than one project from a chapter each year.

Review process.

1. The VCTU review committee will consist of one member of the VCTU executive committee and two At-Large members.

2. The committee will review all project proposals at its regularly scheduled executive committee meetings.
3. Grant applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:
 - a. Strengthening the TU impact in Virginia
 - b. Public education and outreach for TU Stream of Engagement programs.
 - c. Technical merit
4. Grants should be submitted to.

Stan Ikonen
stanikonen@gmail.com

Grant proposal check list.

1. Grant must be submitted 30 days prior to a regularly scheduled VCTU executive committee meeting.
2. The grant proposal should include the following:
 - a. Executive summary
 - ii. Background information
 - b. Goals and Objectives
 - c. Work Plan
 - v. Communications plan
 - d. Budget
 - i. Detail of expenditures
 - ii. Source of matching funds/contribution
 - iii. Explanation of TU volunteer involvement

2024 Virginia Council Calendar

COUNCIL EVENTS (3/year)	DESCRIPTION (<i>Council Officers and Chapter Delegates</i>)	DATE
Council Meeting	<i>Host: Massanutten Chapter</i>	Sat. 2/24/24
Council Meeting	<i>Host: Roanoke Valley Chapter</i>	Sat. 5/11/24
Council Meeting	Annual Meeting <i>Graves Mountain Lodge, Syria</i> (<i>Time TBD</i>)	Sat. 9/21/24
EXCOMM EVENTS	DESCRIPTION (<i>Executive Committee – Business</i>)	DATE
ExComm	Zoom	Mon. 1/8/24
ExComm	Zoom	Mon. 3/18/24
ExComm	Zoom	Mon. 6/17/24
ExComm	Zoom	Mon. 8/12/24
ExComm	Zoom - Follow up on VCTU Annual Meeting action items	Mon. 10/21/24
COUNCIL SUPPORTED EVENTS	DESCRIPTION (Council Participation)	DATE
Virginia Fly Fishing & Wine Festival	The Meadow Events Park, Doswell, VA	Jan 13-14/24
VIRGINIA EVENTS OF INTEREST	DESCRIPTION (Annual Chapter/Angling/Sporting Events)	DATE
Link to Events List	Event list located on the Council Website	

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https://www.virginiatu.org/files/ugd/0ebca1_30e4eafc615d4879bfc23a42056dce49.pdf

TU NATIONAL EVENTS	DESCRIPTION	DATE
TU SE Regional Rendezvous	Nashville, TN	Mar 15-17/24
TU NE Regional Rendezvous	Arlington, VT	May 3-5/24
TU Western Regional Rendezvous	Idaho Falls, ID	May 15-17/24
TU Annual Meeting CX3	Minneapolis-St Paul, MN	Sep 25-29/24
*IMPORTANT TU DATES	DESCRIPTION	DATE
Annual Fiscal Year	April 01, 2024 – March 31, 2025	
Chapter Report	Annual Financial Report – 45 days after the FY	Thu. 5/15/25

Required number and type of Council meetings as described in the Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited Bylaws.

Article II Council Meetings

Section 2: Meeting Schedule: (3 meetings) (attendees – elected officers and appointees, and Chapter delegates – 2 delegates/Chapter)

- A. The Annual Council meeting shall be held in the month of August or September....
- B. Two additional Council meetings shall be held each year and additional regular meetings....

Article IV Committees

Section 1: Executive Committee: (4 meetings) (attendees – elected officers of the Council and all committee chairs)

Council Want Ads

The Virginia Council is looking for membership help in the following areas.

Communications Committee

The Council is reviving the Virginia membership newsletter, and the committee is responsible for continuing the effort as well as determining how best to use other tools like email and social media to communicate with VA chapters and their membership.

Need Editors, Social Media Experts and Contributors.

**For those members interested in volunteering please contact:
Scott Allen – sallen@novatu.org**