

VCTU Council Meeting Notes – February 24, 2024

Date: February 24, 2024

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Location: JMU Professional & Continuing Education, Icehouse Room 117, 127 W Bruce Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting hosted by the Massanutten Chapter and via ZOOM

Lunch at Rocktown Kitchen

Attendees:

In-Person: Jim Wilson (Chair), Burr Tupper (Vice Chair), Bill Pierce (Treasurer), Scott Allen (Secretary), Eric Tichay (NLC Rep), Stan Ikonen (At-Large), Jeff Deering (At-Large, Smith River), Tom Benzing (Conservation), Michael Makufka (TIC), Graham Simmerman (Membership), Tony Hill (Northern Virginia), Richard Faust (Massanutten), Red Bourdage (Rapidan), Andy Holmaas (Rapidan), Jerry Black (Massanutten), Rodney Miner (Massanutten), Mike Bednarski (DWR), Alex McCrickard (DWR Angler Education Coordinator)

Zoom: Bob Krieger (Northern Virginia), Jason Collins (Smith River)

Meeting Called to Order at 9:20 A.M.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:09P.M.

Agenda:

- Opening remarks and agenda review (Jim Wilson)
- Meeting Minutes (9.16.2023)-Review & Approve (Jim Wilson)
 - Motion to approve // Approved
- Introduce/Approve Graham Simmerman as Membership Chair (Jim Wilson)
 - Motion to approve Graham as appointed Membership Chair // Approved
- Featured Speaker(s): Mike Bednarski and Alex McCrickard from DWR
 - Presentation [[Attachment-1](#)]
 - Use of “complimentary workforce” to not only assist with stocking, but to help with assessment of watersheds and wildlife corridors? DWR expressed interest (Tom B)
- Report from Priority Waters sub-committees (Blue Ridge & Shenandoah)
 - Shenandoah (Tom B)
 - Shenandoah, Massanutten, & Roanoke chapters are engaged
 - Zoom meetings ongoing
 - Each chapter identifying streams of interest (i.e. Dry & North River, etc.)
 - Looking to get corridor and culvert training
 - Blue Ridge (Jim W)
 - Tracking same as Shenandoah sub-committee with regards to meetings, stream id, and training.
 - Next call is February 29th at 7:30pm.
- Treasurer Report (Bill Pierce)
 - Money for Mountain Empire is being held by Council

- Garth Run Project restricted fund
 - **Motion to move funds to General Fund (Scott A) // Approved**
- Skyline Chapter funds to be held until 2025 or re-charter
- Reimbursement for Regional Rendezvous meeting attendance
 - **Motion for reimbursement up to \$400 for one chapter representative (Jim W) // Approved**
 - **Motion for reimbursement for Council Officers up to \$600 (Tony H) // Approved**
- TC Energy Grant money opportunity updates (Jim W/Mike M)
 - Discussions ongoing
 - Looking to do a couple of small grants to dip toes in water

Balance sheet - 2/22/2024

Truist Bank

	restricted	unrestricted	total
Checking		33,556.90	
Savings			
Garth Run Project	1,500.00		
Trout in the Classroom - Va	8,720.09		
Nat'l TU - travel for NLC rep	985.30		
Mtn. Empire-uncashed checks	641.45		
Skyline Chptr-chapter balance	7,325.85		
Totals	19,172.69	33,556.90	52,729.59

Recent Transactions for Council Meeting 2/24/2024

9/11/2023	49,750.36	= balance in register	9/11/23
9/16/2023	-411.18	ck 1167	graves mtn lodge-annual meeting
9/20/2023	-77.86	ck 1168	graves mtn lodge-add'l balance due
	49,261.32	= balance in register	10/22/23
11/23/2023	-574.29	ck 1169	eric tichay-reimburse for tu nat'l conference
12/9/2023	-295.05	ck 1171	michael makufka-reimb for vais conf-richmond
12/19/2023	-267.12	ck 1172	scott allen-reimburse for tri-fold brochures
12/22/2023	9,930.00		from tu national - chapter rebates
	58,054.86	= balance in register	12/31/2023
2/3/2024	-191.25	ck 1173	mass. tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-1,018.75	ck 1174	va capital tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-153.75	ck 1175	new river tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-222.50	ck 1176	shenandoah valley tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-111.25	ck 1177	smith river tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-371.25	ck 1178	thom jefferson tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-480.00	ck 1179	rapidan tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-428.75	ck 1180	roanoke valley tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-1,376.25	ck 1181	nova tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-238.75	ck 1182	winchester tu - annual rebate
2/3/2024	-51.25	ck 1183	little stony tu - annual rebate
2/11/2024	-100.00	ck 1184	pure water forum - annual dues
2/11/2024	-581.52	ck 1185	mass. tu - 1/2 of landowners' dinner expense
	52,729.59	= balance in register	2/22/2024

restricted funds reconciliation (after 8/15/23)

Date	Warrenton	tic-va	nlc rep travel	bill willa	uncashed cks mt. ompiro chptr	skyline chptr (until 0/10/26)	total	comments
8/15/2023	1500.00	8558.63	1559.59	395.18			12,013.40	
9/10/23				-395.18				bal to capital chptr
9/10/23						7325.85		from skyline chptr
9/10/23					512.70			
balance 9/11/23	1,500.00	8,558.63	1,559.59	0.00	512.70	7,325.85	19,456.77	
11/23/23			-574.29					to eric tichay
balance 12/31/23	1,500.00	8,558.63	985.30	0.00	512.70	7,325.85	18,882.48	
2/22/24		161.46						ck 1156 fr tic-va
2/22/24					128.75			annual rebate
balance 2/22/24	1500.00	8,720.09	985.30	0.00	641.45	7,325.85	19,172.69	

- Skyline De-charter-redistribution of zip codes (Scott Allen)

- Map [[Attachment-2](#)]
- Skyline geo surrounded by Five (5) chapters
- About 180 members
- Two emails sent to members to self-select new chapter
- **Motion to reassign zip codes to general "close" chapter as depicted on chart (Scott A) // Approved**

- Community Committee Report (Burr Tupper)

- Shenandoah Chapter Grant Request for Buffalo Creek -- \$4K
 - **Motion to approve \$4K grant with the stipulations: (1) funds not used for stocking, (2) Funds expended in fiscal year 2024, (3) Funds dependent on matching "Embrace a Stream" funds // Approved**
- TU members in Shenandoah and Warren Counties being moved from Rapidan to Winchester Chapter
- A new Council Newsletter will be sent out by end of March
 - Current topics
 - Chair report
 - NLC report
 - Youth Education Grant Program
 - Want Ad – TU rep to attend DWR board meetings in Richmond
 - Priority Waters Update
 - Others??
- Youth Education Grant
 - **Motion to approve grant program // Approved**
 - "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 recommended."

1. It is recommended that the funds be placed in a restricted fund.
2. That a grant program be established to dispense the educational funds over a 5-year period.
3. The total grants of up to \$3000 will be made per annum to support the TU youth educational mission in Virginia.

4. Grant requests will be made using a procedure and form like the existing VCTU grant form.
5. A grant committee consisting of 1 VCTU executive member and 2 members at large will be set up to evaluate and approve grant requests.
6. At the end of 5 years from the start of the youth education grant fund all remaining funds will be transferred to the VCTU general fund.
7. Once the grant program has been approved by the VCTU executive it will be advertised in the VCTU newsletter and an email will be sent to each of the chapter Presidents making them aware of the program.

- Alaska Sweepstakes (Jim Wilson)

- Outpost on the Nush donated a week-long trip (\$7K value) to be taken in 2025
- Use Event groove to manage sweepstakes
- **[ACTION] Jim, Jeff, Tony, and Red to coordinate the details for setting up the sweepstakes**

- TIC Report (Mike Makufka)

Year to Date Progress:

From everything I have heard; this is a very good year for TIC. All the schools are preparing for the releases starting in March. Other than two schools losing all of their fish; I have not heard of any major issues.

National Forest Service Permit:

I worked with Dawn Kirk for NFS on streamlining the access process to NFS waters for TIC releases and programs. Now each chapter that releases trout in NFS streams will have a permit with them that allows these releases and activities. All that is necessary is that chapters send me the dates and I forward those dates to the appropriate NFS office.

Website:

I am still working on the updated version of the Trout in the Classroom manual that was written in 2008. There are some discrepancies and a few obvious mistakes. It is harder to write than I thought since I am adding graphics and pictures.

DWR Photos and Videos:

Meghan Marchetti, who is the Creative Content Producer at the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, emailed me to request videos or photos that show TIC activities with students. As she put it:

“We are in the process of creating a video series that showcases our fish hatcheries and highlights the important work being done in the field of trout conservation and education. During my visits to various trout hatcheries across the state, I consistently heard about the impactful "Trout in the Classroom" program. This initiative has evidently made a significant contribution to educating students about trout and fostering a deeper understanding of aquatic ecosystems.”

I asked Chapter Coordinators to reach out to schools to see if I can have some videos or pictures sent in to me for the project. I was pleasantly surprised at the number of responses. I do not know yet when this video will be available.

Virginia Assoc. of Independent Schools (VAIS)

I attended the November 3rd Conference for VAIS to present a program on TIC that was followed up by a webinar on February 7th to schools and administrators. Several teachers already in the TIC program offered testimonials as well. I have had feedback and inquiries from several schools.

- NLC Report (Eric Tichay)

1. Rich Thomas, Chair, National Leadership Council

Rich announced to the NLC:

- Postpone the 2024 annual TU CX3 meeting and cancel in-person NLC meeting and instead host our Annual NLC Meeting on Zoom
- Repurpose the annual \$1,250 NLC Representative stipend to the Council to subsidize registration and travel expenses to Regional Rendezvous
- The Grassroots and New Initiatives Workgroups are working to build consensus on the mission, vision, and purpose of the NLC

Rich submitted requests to the NLC New Initiatives Workgroup (NIA).

- Re-focus the direction of the NLC in support of Trout Unlimited new strategic plan with emphasis on Priority Waters and membership.
- The National Conservation Agenda (NCA) remains as written and only change should the NIA or other concerned NLC Representative request a need for change.
- Request "closure" (archive) of the following Critical Focus Areas (CFA) due to either progress or 24-month time frame window to complete.

Bristol Bay Pebble Mine

Yellowstone National Park Native Fish Conservation:

- Review remaining CFAs for suggested areas of re-engagement and/or embedding within a specific workgroup (Workgroups take responsibility for long-term focus areas. ET)

- New CFA request:

Title – Membership – Acquisition, Retention & Engagement (M.A.R.E.)

Issue – TU's membership is in a constant decline, since 2019 we are down ~ 11,000 members

2. Priority Waters

TU launched a new Priority Waters website. <https://prioritywaters.tu.org/>

3. NLC Town Hall – March 5, 2024

Zoom presentation on the NLC Assessment Survey. The agenda will be distributed next week.

4. Regional Rendezvous 2024

Join TU volunteers, members, supporters, partners, and staff from across the country at one of three Regional Rendezvous scheduled for 2024!

- Southeast Rendezvous – Nashville, Tennessee – March 15-17
- Northeast Rendezvous – Arlington, Vermont – May 3-5
- Western Rendezvous – Idaho Falls, Idaho – May 17-19

- Climate Change Coordinator Report--Federal legislation & VA Gen. Assembly update (Jim Wilson)

-- The VA General assembly is in session and is in Crossover, so bills that were passed by the Senate are about to be heard in the House and vice versa. The immediate ask is for members of the House to pass S 455, which is the Wildlife Corridors Action Plan Grant Fund. The associated budget amendment to provide \$5 million in seed money did not make it to the state budget reports. We need to urge legislators to provide this essential seed money. SB 455 may be heard by the House Commerce Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee as early as February 28th. Legislators need to hear from us now about why this legislation should be a Virginia priority.

--Unfortunately, EPA VTSSS funding is coming to an end at the end of the federal fiscal year.

-- At the Federal level, the number one Ask is for Congress to protect climate-smart funding in the new Farm Bill. The 2022 IRA allocated \$20 billion in aid for climate-smart practices that help farmers and forest-owners store more carbon pollution in trees. But that funding is at risk of being re-allocated when the Farm Bill is renegotiated this year. Send a quick email to ask your members of Congress to protect these climate-smart investments.

-- The other climate-related legislation is the PROVE IT Act (S.1863). This bill has DOE studying greenhouse gas emission intensities for aluminum, cement, crude oil, fertilizer, iron, steel, plastic, etc. industries here and abroad. The idea is to have these carbon intensities by country quantified during the next three years so that once carbon pricing is in place here, that carbon fees can be applied to the goods imported from other countries, if their carbon emission rates are higher than those in the U.S. This is known as a carbon border adjustment mechanism. The European Union will begin applying such fees in 2026 on imported carbon intensive products. Please ask your Senators to back S. 1863.

- Operating Plan--Review & Update (Scott Allen)

-- [[Attachment-3](#)]

- Open Discussion

-- Thomas Jefferson Chapter (Jim W)

-- "Inappropriate" posts on the Thomas Jefferson Facebook page

-- National Vol Ops drafted a letter to president

-- Chapter president resigned

-- **[ACTION] Jim and Graham to identify ways to support Chapter as needed in leadership transition**

-- Reduced-sized Brook Trout Poster available for Council and Chapters—POC Eric Tichay

-- eDNA study data is still being processed (Jim W)

-- Completion ETA is late April. Once ready the Council will seek to get presentation on findings

-- Next meeting scheduled for May in Roanoke (Jim)

-- Potential for a Council "Activity" in-conjunction with meeting.

- Chapter Reports

-- Shenandoah Valley Chapter (Tom)

-- April 6 – International Fly Fishing Film Tour, The Foundry, Waynesboro

<https://shenandoahvalleytu.com/chapter-events/> for details

-- April 20 – South River Cleanup, meet at Waynesboro's Constitution Park, 10am-noon

-- May 10 - SVTU Golf Tournament, Ironwood Country Club, Staunton, 8:30am Shotgun start.

-- Also, of interest to TU members:

-- March 21 – "Hidden Rivers" screening, Wayne Theater, 7pm

<https://www.freshwatersillustrated.org/hidden-rivers>

[[Attachment-4](#)] See attached flyer for details

-- April 27 – Riverfest, Waynesboro's Constitution Park <https://riverfestwaynesboro.org/> for details

End