

VCTU Executive Committee Meeting Notes – August 18, 2025

(Notes taken by Tony Hill)

Attendees: Jim Wilson, Burr Tupper, Tom Benzing, Amy Orr, Mike Makufka, Tony Hill, Eric Tichay, Graham Simmerman, Paul Kearney, Mike Heatwole, Richard Foust

Meeting Start: 7:30 p.m.

Meeting End: 8:30 p.m.

1. Approve Minutes from 30 June ExComm Meeting

- Approved

2. Annual Meeting Plan

- September 20th at Graves Mountain Lodge
- Speaker Suggestions- Dave Demerest to discuss what SNP Interns did (are doing), Evan Childress. Subsequently it was determined that neither is available. Also suggested was Seth Coffman., also not available. Seth will check if someone else from TU Staff is available. Dawn Kirk may be available. Paul Kearney offered a presentation on the Evolution of the Modern Fly Rod if needed.

3. Nominations for awards

- Plaques will be given to three people from UVA who have worked on VTSSS for many years: Ami Riscassi, Todd Scanlon, Suzanne Maben. (Check spelling?)
- Burr Tupper nominated the Winchester Chapter for Golden Chapter Award, approved by vote.

4. Nominating Committee Recommendations

- Richard Foust nominated Tom Sadler for VCTU Chair position. Tom submitted his resume, and his nomination was approved unanimously.
- Jim Wilson said that he will continue to work with the VA Capital chapter to build out its board

5. Chapter Reports/Updates

- Eric Tichay, Regional VP for Southern Virginia, reported that Mountain Empire Chapter is making progress.

6. NLC Rep Report (Tom Benzing)

- I. Summary of my recent activities

Since my last report (6/30), I have participated in two NLC meetings. The Land Conservancy workgroup met on August 12 to review the guidelines and a request for proposals to promote the Coldwater Land Conservancy Fund (CLCF). The CLCF funds projects that result in conservation easements or

land trust or agency ownership of critical properties that protect native and wild salmonid habitats.

During the NLC Town Hall meeting on August 12, Chris Wood (Executive Director) explained some changes to personnel including a promotion of Keith Curley to Chief Conservation Officer. The intent of these changes is to “integrate conservation science and volunteer engagement” and Chris will share an updated organizational chart.

Chris congratulated the TU community for “beating back” federal proposals to sell public lands. He identified our next challenge as fighting proposals to rescind the Roadless Rule. Roadless areas on our public lands have a significant nexus with strongholds for wild and native trout and salmonids. For more information, visit:

<https://www.tu.org/magazine/from-the-president/why-rescinding-the-roadless-rule-is-a-problem-for-trout-and-salmon/>

Rich Thomas (NLC Chair) reviewed the process for updating the National Conservation Agenda (NCA) and reminded the group that a vote to approve the NCA will be held during the annual meeting in October. Rich also encouraged NLC representatives to promote TU’s Vimeo channel where over 100 videos cover common topics relevant to chapter leaders.

Outside of those meetings, I have been asking TU Engagement staff about TU Businesses (TUBs) in Virginia. These 14 TUBs are listed in the back of Trout magazine and available at:

<https://www.tu.org/businesses/virginia/>

Currently, there’s little communication between councils, chapters, and these businesses and I am interested in whether and how we could develop stronger relationships. Please let me know if you have thoughts about this idea and the program for TUBs in general.

II. Communications to councils and chapters from TU national

A vote on the proposed 2026 National Conservation Agenda (NCA) will be held on October 22nd during the Virtual annual meeting. I encourage the council and chapters to support the new NCA process and participate in identifying Critical Focus Areas for the organization. If approved, the new NCA process will include opportunities to respond to a survey where members can submit comments on future conservation initiatives. For more

information, contact me (benzintr@jmu.edu) or follow the developments here:

<https://www.tu.org/get-involved/volunteer-tacklebox/council-leader-resources/national-leadership-council/national-conservation-agenda/>

Dates and locations for the 2026 Regional Rendezvous meetings have been set. They are:

March 13–15, 2026 Southeast Regional Rendezvous @ Black Mountain, North Carolina

April 10-12, 2026 Northeast Regional Rendezvous @ Roscoe, New York

April 16–18, 2026 Rockies Regional Rendezvous @ Missoula, Montana

May 1–3, 2026 Midwest Regional Rendezvous @ Roscommon, Michigan

I encourage all members in Virginia to attend one or more of these events to connect with other TU members and develop their skills in fishing, conservation, and leadership. The council and chapters are especially encouraged to fund individual registration and offset travel costs for rising leaders in Virginia.

Tom suggested starting a program between all states bordering Chesapeake Bay to work on restoring Brook Trout habitat.

Find registration links and more information for all the Regional Rendezvous meetings here:

<https://www.tu.org/get-involved/volunteer-tacklebox/volunteer-leader-trainings-events/annual-meetings-regional-rendezvous/regional-rendezvous/>

III. Upcoming events and deadlines at regional and national levels

October 22, 6-7:15pm: NLC Annual Business Meeting (online at tu.org)

October 22, 8-9pm: TU Annual Membership Meeting (online at tu.org)

7. TIC report (Mike Makufka)

- Not all schools reporting on their program results, Mike is working to correct. Mike will Zoom with Mountain Empire Chapter to explain / help with TIC. Several new schools are adopting TIC. Egg delivery is expected between mid-September and early October.

8. Treasurer (Michael Heatwole)

- \$47,266 in checking with \$25,342 restricted.
- The youth fund has been expended.
- Checks going out soon to chapters for membership rebates
- TC Energy Grant for \$10K is remaining.

9. Community Committee (Burr Tupper)

- Articles need for Council Fall Newsletter. This will go out after the Annual Meeting.

10. Priority Waters next steps

- Stream Barrier Assessment Training- - Next Training on September 12th Roanoke.
- Stream Barrier Assessments - 50 Upper South River Crossings have been assessed so far.
- Winchester Chapter is doing water quality assessments and starting Stream Barrier Assessments.

11. DWR report (Lane Thurgood)

- Via Email:
- The August Va DWR fisheries portion of the public meetings will be entirely focused on catfish.
- The fisheries portion of the October meeting is planned to be focused on smallmouth.
- As for the update on the Trout stocking survey that went out earlier this year, the preliminary results are in and DWR is discussing internally the implications of the survey. There is not too much that can be shared publicly yet, but it is anticipated that there will be changes to the state stocking plan. They anticipate rolling proposed changes out in spring 2026 to take place for the 2027 regulation guide. Mike Bednarski believes he can provide more information in a couple of weeks, so I will remain in touch with him and pass on any updates to the Council.

12. Climate Coordinator Actions (Jim Wilson)

- Preparing a short presentation for the Annual meeting in September about climate attribution science.

13. 2026 Calendar

- Charlottesville Meeting February 21, 2026

14. Open Discussion

- Paul Kearney on work done by interns working with Dave Demerest in SNP, it was found there is a decline in adult fish however a healthy population of young of year fish.

- Jim asked Dawn Kirk whether they needed the Council to apply to Dominion for a grant to fund another year of UVA lab analysis of Forest Service site water samples. She replied that they are working through an agreement process between the FS and UVA--with indications that funding is secured for VTSSS for the next 10 years. Agreements still need to be submitted and make it through the DOGE vetting process. They expect more extensive quarterly sampling in Jan 2026.

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