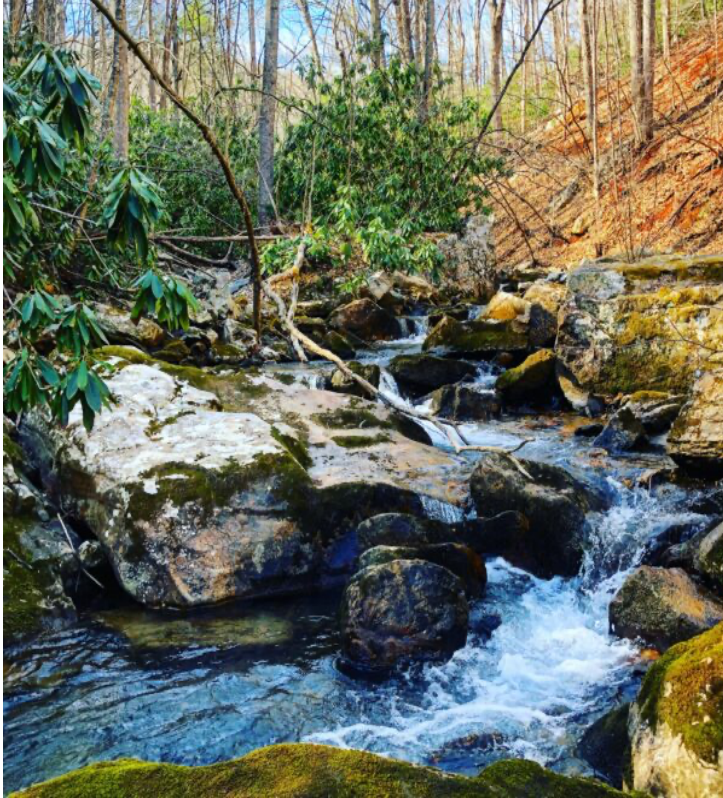




2023 Fall/Winter Newsletter

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Message From Council Chairman – Jim Wilson

The VA Council began 2023 with a booth at the January Fly Fishing & Wine Festival in Doswell. This event helped us spread the word about TU and to re-start the VA Capital Chapter with a new set of leaders. In person meetings were held in Salem, Bridgewater, and Syria. One of the key products of our meetings was an operating plan that is consistent with the latest TU National Strategic Plan. This operating plan gives us objectives and action items to pursue in the next 5 years. Key among these is identifying three Priority Waters areas and establishing workgroups that will identify stream projects that will bring the most benefit for retaining and expanding where our native eastern brook trout can prosper despite the challenges that they face.

One of the state Council's roles is to assist and counsel chapters in matters involving membership recruitment, fundraising, projects, programs, and communications. We know that some chapters have been struggling and some of this is attributable to the pandemic and the difficulty of planning in-person meetings. The Council can assist chapters during 2024 by having a TU booth at an event in your area that is likely to attract people who care about conservation and coldwater resources. Please let us know a couple of months in advance when you see an opportunity for the Council to staff a booth and to assist your chapter in attracting new members and leaders. Reach out to your chapter President or one of the Council officers if you have an event in mind.

As the average age of TU membership creeps higher, we are putting more emphasis on attracting a younger, and more diverse membership. We hope that every TU member can attend an event during 2024 and our chapters are emphasizing activities that are held when families can attend, and the younger generations can learn more about fishing for trout and conserving coldwater resources. Activities include tree planting, rock rolling, letting your representatives know how you want them to vote on legislation, or joining other members to fish in new places. And we welcome your suggestions about events and activities that appeal to you.

One concerning issue this year was the August 31st closure of fishing in Shenandoah National Park due to drought conditions. This closure continued at least through Thanksgiving (when this was written). This is added evidence of how

the changing climate is stressing our coldwater fisheries. Let us hope that we get enough snow and rain over the winter to minimize the damage to our native eastern brook trout.

One of the important contributions that Virginia Tuers made to Community Science in 2023 was in support of the SNP's environmental DNA study. The study director is Evan Childress—the SNP's Chief Fisheries Biologist. eDNA lets scientists detect trout in a stream segment without collecting the fish themselves. This can be an efficient way to obtain a snapshot of populations which is much less expensive than capturing trout in nets. On June 10th, TU volunteers took water samples from an array of SNP stream sites and delivered these samples to the Park's scientists for evaluation. We expect to hear about study results early in 2024. If you want to learn more about trout-based eDNA studies listen to the Orvis podcast from October 2023 featuring Helen Neville (TU's Senior Scientist).

If you plan to attend the VA Fly Fishing & Wine Festival in January 2024 please stop by the TU Booth and visit with us.

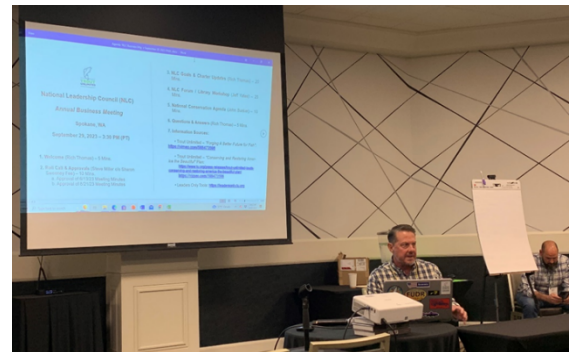
National Leadership Council Notes -Eric Tichay

I recently attended the International Fly Tying Symposium in Somerset, New Jersey. It was there that I met members from a New Jersey TU Chapter and Chapter President manning an exhibit table and tying flies. I asked if they knew their state TU National Leadership Council (NLC) representative. I was surprised to learn the TU members didn't know about the NLC or their state representative.

Here is an introduction to the NLC, and what it is and what it does. The simple idea of the NLC is that input and ideas from the grassroots Councils and Chapters should bubble up through NLC representatives to the TU Board of Trustees and national staff, and national initiatives should filter back through the NLC to our members and supporters. The role of the NLC and its rules for functioning are detailed in Article IV. of the TU bylaws and in this comprehensive NLC Representative Manual. The NLC is the volunteer body that sets the direction of TU and is made up of one representative elected from each state of TU's 36 councils and the NLC chair and secretary. The NLC has three purposes:

- Establish the National Conservation Agenda (NCA)
- Facilitate implementation of the National Conservation Agenda (NCA)
- Build the organizational capacity of TU

The NCA encapsulates TU's top-line priorities, like coldwater conservation, reconnecting habitat, and critical issues like blocking the Pebble Mine in Alaska. It guides the strategic plan and every initiative that flows from that. The NLC helps put the NCA into action through 14 workgroups focused on critical conservation issues, key regions, and organizational needs. These workgroups are composed mainly, but not exclusively, of NLC members and are supported by one or more staff members. There are two main categories of workgroups: conservation and organizational. Workgroups generally meet by Zoom once a month. Workgroup attendance is open to any TU member.



The NLC meets annually in person at the TU Annual Meeting and via Zoom teleconferences throughout the year. The NLC Chair and Secretary are elected annually by the members of then and serve on the TU Board of Trustees. In addition, the NLC nominates grassroots trustees to serve on the Board as well as Embrace A Stream committee members. To find out more about the NLC and current NLC workgroups ask your council's NLC.

Representative, Eric Tichay email: erictichay@yahoo.com.

Priority Waters – Scott Allen/Seth Coffman

When TU embarked on its new Strategic Plan it included the development of Priority Waters.

What are Priority Waters you might ask?

Priority Waters are rivers and streams across America where Trout Unlimited is focusing our energies to care for and recover wild and native trout and salmon watersheds. Rooted in science and developed in collaboration with TU volunteers and trusted partners, our shared Priority Waters are the foundation of a strategic roadmap to protect, restore and reconnect waters, so future generations can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon.

As anglers we are eternal optimists. By identifying the rivers and streams where we can have the greatest impact and putting our energies and resources into restoration and advocacy efforts in those watersheds, we will create more and better fishable water for the next generation of anglers and conservationists. But it's not just about fish. The work we do

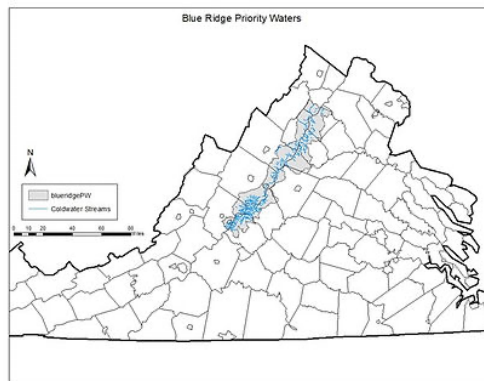
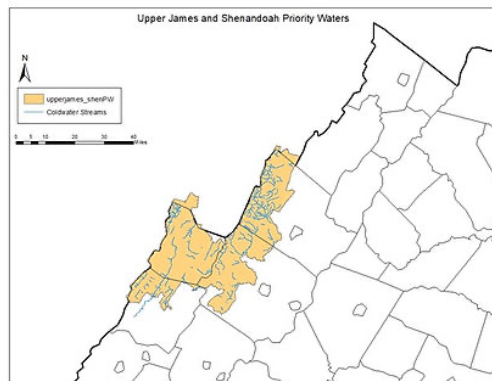
creates healthy water for communities and agriculture, supports ecosystems that are key to biodiversity and climate resilience, helps landscapes adapt to and recover from flooding and wildfire, creates family-wage jobs, and boosts America's multi-billion-dollar recreation economy.

In Virginia, a team of volunteers from our chapters worked with TU staff during the first quarter of 2022 to recommend a set of Priority Waters for the Commonwealth. The work group identified three areas as Priority Waters: (1) Blue Ridge, (2) Upper James—Shenandoah and (3) Grayson Highlands. TU National accepted the recommendations offered by the team and strategic action plans were drafted by TU staff member Seth Coffman.

But the real work is just beginning. Working groups for each of the 3 priority waters have started meeting to explore datasets, identify data gaps and data needs to inform conservation action, and to find restoration and conservation opportunities. That doesn't just mean instream habitat and tree plantings. It can include advocacy at the state and federal level for funding, review of partner agency management strategies in the priority waters and ensuring when it comes to trout and coldwater streams the goal is wild and native self-sustaining populations.

One of the three organizational goals of the VA Council is to: "Identify Virginia state shared priority waters for native and wild trout and take strategic action to care for and recover them." Over the past few months, the Council has initiated actions towards achieving this long-term goal. Here is a list of actions to date:

- Establish a dedicated page on the Council website to host reference material (<https://www.virginiatu.org/priority-waters>).
- Develop a GIS Map viewing application. This tool will evolve over time as new layers and filters are developed and added. The application can be found on the Council website.
- Call for Chapter representatives to work on the Priority Waters Committee and sub-committees.
- Hold Council-wide initial meetings (via ZOOM) to lay the foundation for each of the three identified Priority Waters (i.e. Blue Ridge, Upper James, and Grayson Highlands)
- Establish sub-committees for each of the three Virginia Priority Waters. It was agreed that the focus for now would be the Blue Ridge and Upper James areas—where the many of Chapters have a presence--and efforts in the Grayson Highlands would be developed later.



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.

Trout In the Classroom – Mike Makufka



During the first week in October trout eggs were delivered to most of the 212 Virginia Trout in the Classroom locations.

Trout in the Classroom (TIC) is a conservation-oriented environmental education program for elementary, middle, and high school students. In Virginia, the program is a cooperative effort between the Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited (TU) and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, (DWR). In the program, students and teachers raise trout from fertilized eggs supplied by the DWR. The project starts shortly after school starts in the fall and commences in the spring with release of the baby trout in streams approved by DWR.

During the year, each teacher tailors the program to fit his or her curricular needs. Therefore, each TIC program is unique. TIC has interdisciplinary applications in science, social studies, mathematics, language arts, fine arts, and physical education.



While the immediate goal of Trout in the Classroom is to increase student knowledge of water quality and coldwater conservation, its long-term goal is to reconnect an increasingly urbanized population of youth to the system of streams, rivers, and watersheds that sustain them. Successful programs have helped:

- connect students to their local environments and their local watersheds.
- teach about watershed health and water quality, and
- get students to care about fish and the environment.

Virginia Council Grant Program – Burr Tupper

In 2023 the Virginia TU Council established a grant program to support chapter programs that strengthen the impact of TU in Virginia. Starting in 2024 the council will budget \$5000 annual to support conservation impact and public education and outreach programs. Chapters are encouraged to submit project proposals for any amount up to \$5000. For more details on the grant program please visit the Virginia Council website.

Virginia TU Annual Meeting Awards – Burr Tupper

Every year at the annual meeting the Virginia TU Council awards to chapters and individuals that support the Trout Unlimited Cold Water objectives and goal. The following individuals and chapter were the 2023 recipients.

- Gold Chapter award presented to the Massanutten chapter which accomplished significant progress in outreach and conservation programs in their area.
- Youth Education award present to Chuck Hoysa who has demonstrated exemplary leadership in youth education through his work in Trout in the Classroom programs in his area.
- Conservationist of the Year award was given to Dave Holladay of the Roanoke Valley Chapter for his work with DWR to expand the Delayed Harvest Section of the Roanoke River.
- Certificates of Appreciation were awarded to the following individuals.
 - David Juth – Winchester Chapter for his work on the Council Website
 - Daniel Lazenby—Northern Virginia Chapter for his work in support of the Northern Virginia Chapters conservation and administrative programs.
 - Marianne Smith- Northern Virginia Chapter for her efforts in setting up the local Stream Girls/Stream Kids programs.
 - Tony Conte- Shenandoah Chapter for outstanding work in support of the local Trout in the Classroom programs.
 - Bill Conlin- Massanutten Chapter for his tireless work on stream improvement projects in the Shenandoah Valley and Trout in the Classroom programs.
 - John Tymony- Rapidan Chapter for his work in local outreach and conservation programs.
 - Mike Taggart- Rapidan Chapter for his efforts in conservation and outreach programs.
 - Brenda Willis- Roanoke Valley Chapter in support of chapters administrative and outreach programs.
 - Al Kitteridge- Smith River Chapter for his chapter leadership and advocacy of the betterment of the Smith River.

Advocacy – Jim Wilson

Virginia held its elections for state offices on November 7th, with the result being that the Democrats hold a slight majority in both the House and the Senate, while we continue with a Republican Governor (Youngkin) for the next two years.

Therefore, it is difficult to see how any broad conservation agendas will influence legislation during that time.

Nevertheless, it behooves us to pay attention to the new bills that are introduced this legislative session. One carryover item from last year is the Commonwealth's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. Legislation passed under Gov. Northam that had VA opt-in to the RGGI. However, the Youngkin administration took administrative action via the Air Pollution Control Board in 2023 to remove us from RGGI. The Southern Environmental Law Center filed suit to keep this from happening and that lawsuit is being heard by the court.

While TU's objective is for Congress to pass a carbon fee and dividend bill, that is unlikely to happen soon. However, there are other significant actions that Congress could take to advance low or zero carbon emission projects. One is permitting reform.

The BIG WIRES Act has been introduced in the House and Senate. When enacted it will update and streamline the country's patchwork energy transmission system. The BIG WIRES Act addresses the need for improved energy transmission. It is the next big step in successful permitting reform in the United States. The U.S. electric grid is organized into multiple regions that mostly work independently with limited exchanges of power between them. But imagine if we could share power more efficiently among those regions. Sunny southern States or breezy mountain States could make their clean energy available far and wide. Call your Rep. and Senators and urge them to cosponsor the BIG WIRES Act H.R. 5551 and S. 2827.

Good Sam Bill -Trout Unlimited praises legislation to address abandoned mine cleanups.

A bill that would help address the chronic problem of pollution leaking from abandoned mines across the West was introduced in both the House and the Senate.

Abandoned mines represent the least addressed and greatest threat to water quality in the nation, said Chris Wood, President and CEO of Trout Unlimited. Abandoned mines affect fish, wildlife, drinking water supplies, and thousands of communities around the nation. Congressional action can help solve the problem."

The Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act of 2023 would help address an estimated 500,000 abandoned mines (mines with no one responsible for clean-up) in the American West, 33,000 of which are known to be causing environmental damage. These mines have polluted more than 110,000 miles of stream with acid-mine drainage and metals such as mercury, lead, and arsenic.

For more information visit Standup.tu.org.

2024 Virginia Council Calendar

COUNCIL EVENTS (3/year)	DESCRIPTION (Council Officers and Chapter Delegates)	DATE
Council Meeting	Host: Massanutten Chapter	Sat. 2/24/24
Council Meeting	Host: Roanoke Valley Chapter	Sat. 5/11/24
Council Meeting	Annual Meeting <i>Graves Mountain Lodge, Syria</i> (Time TBD)	Sat. 9/21/24
EXCOMM EVENTS	DESCRIPTION (Executive Committee – Business)	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	
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.

Membership Committee

This committee is responsible for maintaining current membership lists and recruiting new members. The committee will work with the Council and chapters on the best methods for recruiting and maintain current members.

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.

For those members interested in volunteering please contact:

Scott Allen – sallen@novatu.org

Jim Wilson - jhw210@juno.com