

2023 June Newsletter

TUWestern Driftless







Editorial by Carl Berberich

Rural Well Water and Ground Water Testing

People living in a rural setting should be testing their drinking water on a regular basis, due to the increase in feedlot sizes in SE MN. Filmore county just doubled their feedlot size from 2000 animal units to 4000. This obviously means much more manure/nitrates will be produced and applied to the local fields. When the fish kill on Rush Creek last July 2022 happened, it was reported that two separate farming operations were each reported to have 2 violations each. The first violation was for not recording their manure application. Their second violation was for applying manure near a stream and/or sinkhole. Not recording the manure application, looks to me like they could be hiding what they're doing. If this is the case, we need to monitor the ground water closer for our protection. This testing of the ground water can be very easy to do, and cheap. For example, even Walmart sells 50 test strips for \$14.79. Just put the test strip in a glass of water for 1-2 seconds and compare the results with the color chart on the bottle.

WiseH20 Testing

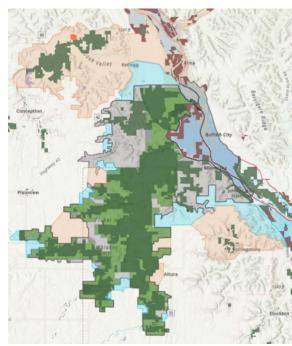
I was talking with Don Parsons at Clean Water Coalition's Forum in Lewiston last May. He told me that he has been doing lots of WiseH2O testing of streams lately. However, he stated that he recently tested Etna Creek, and the nitrate level was at 50 parts per million. Which is the worst he has ever seen for a stream. Federal levels for safe drinking water are listed at 10 ppm. However, doctors are now showing research that shows many cancers that can occur in levels as low as 1 ppm. This does not sound good for us. Ugh!

Federal EPA Petition for Ground Water protection

We will try and monitor the who, what, where and when of this petition and report on it's what is happening and any progress with it. Sarah Horner from the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) will be keeping us updated. Her initial article is on page 5.

Driftless National Park?

Is there going to be a new US national park called **Driftless National Park?** And where would it be? Well, it could happen. It looks like the largest public owned land happens to be in the Minnesota's SE Driftless region. This comprises up to 54,000 acres. One can find this proposal online here. This is not a political proposal, nor is it a way to buy up private land. Nor is it a way to end hunting or fishing rights in this area. It's actually covers the Whitewater SP and the accompanying WMAs. This is very significant and could have lots of positive impacts.



Hiawatha TU

By John Weiss, HTU Board member

LANESBORO — While interviewing state conservation officers helping those with disabilities fish at the ponds at Sylvan Park in Lanesboro and those who were aides to the anglers, I heard something I had never thought of -learning was going both ways.

That realization got me to wondering if we can extrapolate that to our own fishing lives.

The obvious thing in Lanesboro was the COs helping those with special needs bait hooks, cast and in some cases, reel in any of the 1,500 keeper rainbow trout the Department of Natural Resources stocked (there were a few suckers caught too). The DNR even cleaned and packed fish for those who wanted to take some home.

Much more subtle was that the COs were learning better to deal with people they probably seldom encounter.

Sue Lamkin, a direct support professional for the LIFE (Learning, Inclusion, Fun and Empowerment) in Austin had this to say: "I think that it's wonderful these conservation officers, they are teaching ... and they are learning things, they are learning how to deal with people with different abilities."

State Conservation Officer Annette Kylllo talks with Nancy Qual while Qual was fishing at the pond at Sylvan Park in Lanesboro.

Kelli Pierce, activities director of Fillmore County DAC (Developmental Achievement Center) agreed: COs must learn to talk with people with difficulties such as those who are deaf, blind or have other limitations. "Everyone is different,

you learn how to deal with each one," she said. If you're not accustomed to them, it can be challenging, she said. "They are sharp, they can sense if others aren't familiar with disabilities."

I'm not saying we need to help those with special needs, though it would be great, but we need to be teachers too. I'm working on getting at least two of young grandchildren fishing after I failed

miserably to get any of my three children fishing, hunting or doing anything outdoors with me. When I do work with them, I also learn. I'm forced to think basics, I can't hit them with Texas-rigging for bass or dry fly fishing for trout. Simple, keep it simple. To do that, I have to remember the basics and I also love to watch them enjoy the day. That's something CO Annette Kyllo said - it was a delight to see the woman she was helping grin and get excited catching a small sucker.

State Conservation Officer Phil George gets a rod ready to cast while helping people with special needs to fish in Lanesboro



And last summer, while at a lake near Grand Rapids, I helped granddaughter Eleanor, 5, catch her first fish. When I tried to show her all the things she needed to do to improve, she hit me with this wisdom: "No one does fishing perfect." I think about that a lot when I'm trout fishing and things aren't going right, which they haven't been. I don't have to be perfect.

Iowa Driftless Chapter

By Mike Rogers, President of Driftless Chapter



Water Quality Testing Update--

Training for our testing was completed on June 10th with pledges by members to maintain water quality tests on 6 different streams over the next year (Twin Springs, Trout River, Trout Run, North Bear, South Bear, and Coldwater Creek). We hope to have updates on this as we move along with the testing.

Casey Springs update--

Work has begun on Casey Springs to improve bank stabilization and fish habitat for what is deemed as a suitable habitat for our native brook trout. As previously reported, the TU Embrace a Stream grant was awarded to the IA Driftless Chapter for \$10k with matches from our chapter as well as state fish habitat funds. Additionally, a Trout and Salmon grant with funds to match from Iowa Coldwater Conservancy and Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association were provided. Funds to assist in our match provided by the Winneshiek County Conservation Board were also critical in making this come to life. We thank all parties for their contributions and are excited for what the future brings with Casey Springs.

Win-Cres TU May 3 Meeting Notes

By Mark Reisetter Win-Cres Board member

Win-Cres will have a booth at the July 12-16 Winona County Fair. Board members are asked to contact Roger Berg for times you might be available to assist.

The July 28-30 Winona Base Camp event that we have been asked to participate in, will be held at Prairie Island. Anyone who is willing to organize our involvement with this event is asked to contact President Shepard.

Dave Schaffer provided the Win-Cres Board information regarding the pros and cons of a gas vs battery operated chain saw. A motion was made and passed to use the \$1500 Stihl certificate awarded to Win-Cres to purchase the MSA 220 electric chain saw. Dave also shared upcoming mowing events. Dave was given board approval to purchase a cart to haul saws and other needed equipment and supplies for mowing.

Discussion was held regarding the Joe Lepley financial bequest. Win-Cres Treasurer Tom Stoa provided information for the board's consideration. Tom will provide a final report at our August board meeting.

The next Win-Cres Board meeting will be July 14.

TCTU fishing Minnesota

By Bob Luck, President of TCTU

Is it just me, or are the fish bigger on our streams this season? I recall hearing Kasey Yallaly of the Wisconsin DNR mentioning in a TCTU chapter meeting that we could expect bigger fish due to a strong spawning season a few years ago, so perhaps it really is true. Not that it is helping me. In a typical year, I land about 10 trout over 16". As of today, nearly halfway through the season, my total is one. Not that there haven't been opportunities--I've just managed to blow them.

Things started out with a bad omen in early April on my second day on the stream. I tightlined a nymph through a deep pool in Camp Creek and felt a solid thud. "Nice fish", I thought "maybe 14". After a minute or so of sulking on the streambed, the fish started moving downstream. I got a look at it and revised my estimate to 18". Too big to horse in with my Tenkara rod and 5x tippet, so I followed him downstream where he proceeded to wrap himself around some riprap and break off. "Oh well", I thought. "It's early in the season, and there will be plenty of other big fish". There have been plenty--and plenty of ways to lose them.



So far this month I have had three large fish break well-tied knots on 5x. At least I thought they were well-tied. A few days ago, I decided to try out the 16/20 knot that author Jason Randall taught us at our May chapter meeting. So far, no fish have broken off, but there haven't been any 16-inchers either.

The most amusing incident happened early this month. I hired a guide who took me out to fish big dry flies at night in one of his secret spots. I am sworn to secrecy, but I can confirm that it was somewhere between the Iowa border and Rochester. After watching the sun set behind the trees, he tied on a big hopper and told me to cast upstream to the near bank and make a strip retrieve. I managed to follow his instructions, and halfway through the retrieve, the fly stopped. I set the hook and the fight was on. It was a guide-tied knot on stout 2X tippet in a pool with few obstacles, so I figured I was going to break the jinx. The guide went into the water to net the fish without turning on his light to avoid spooking other fish. "Wait!" he said. "I think it may be a muskrat!" Somehow in the confusion, the leader wrapped around him, and the fish-cum-muskrat broke off. We did land two 15-inch fish from that hole. I have never been so disappointed by a 15-inch fish in my life. Hope is the coin of the realm in trout fishing, and as I write this article I am packing my car to drive up to the Straight River near Park Rapids to fish the Hex hatch tonight. It is only a 4-hour drive from the Twin Cities, and it doesn't take long to get used to the buzz of the mosquitos, especially if you live close to the airport.

MCEA and Ground Water Protection

By Sarah Horner Communications Director for the MCEA



The karst region of Southeastern Minnesota has a drinking water crisis, and the primary cause is industrial farming practices.

As Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOS) and monoculture row crop production have grown across the state, so have nitrate levels in drinking water. Nitrate levels now routinely exceed safe limits in the karst region, where the unique geology allows nitrogen from manure and commercial fertilizer to rapidly infiltrate groundwater.

Nitrate-contaminated drinking water can lead to health problems including colorectal cancer, thyroid disease, and birth defects and low birth weight in infants. Private well owners are particularly vulnerable because they have no recourse to protect their water from pollution.



Fish and wildlife are also affected by runoff from agricultural fields into lakes, rivers and streams. Six fish kills have occurred in the region since 2015 alone, including three in Winona County where anywhere from 1,000 to 10,000 fish were found dead at once.

Despite an acute awareness of the problem, state and local authorities have thus far failed to sufficiently address the crisis. That's why the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) and ten other environmental organizations <u>filed a petition</u> with the Environmental Protection Agency this past April, urging the federal agency to intervene.

The EPA is reviewing the petition. In the meantime, MCEA is exploring additional strategies to compel action at the state and local level, such as implementing animal-unit caps, incentivizing the use of cover crops and/or requiring polluters to provide safe and free alternative drinking water supplies for impacted communities.

We are asking residents across the state to sign our call to action to send a loud and clear message to officials at *all* levels that Minnesotans expect an immediate response to this crisis. No one should have to worry about what's in their water. Add your name here.

Volunteer Mowing Angler Stream Paths in SE MN

Story and Photos By Dave Shaffer, Win-Cres Board Member



Michael Tanguay of the Twin Cities chapter of Trout Unlimited handles the brush mower on the final stretch of an angler trail on the South Fork of the Root River.

Volunteers Lou George, Mike Jeresek, Alan Lundstrom, Mike Tanguay and me from Win-Cres, Hiawatha and Twin Cities chapters cut the trail June 14 using Win-Cres' walk-behind brush mower. The path largely follows a rough angler trail and four-wheeler tracks from recent buckthorn spraying. The path ends at a stream crossing that the mower is unable to ford. Special thanks to Lou for hauling the mower, and Paul Girtler for storing and maintaining it. TU also is grateful for the cooperation of landowner Tom Wunderlich, and DNR's Melissa Wagner, Lanesboro area fisheries manager, and Angela Yuska, a Prestonbased forester, who reviewed and approved mowing plans.

The mowing crew also plans to mow paths on parts of Garvin Brook and Rush Creek through the summer. Please consider volunteering on our mowing crew. A typical job takes 2-3 hours on a weekday morning and involves walking and light lifting. It's a great way to see and hear about places to trout fish, and to meet anglers with deep knowledge of Driftless-area fishing. Contact program coordinator Dave Shaffer

at <u>dshaffer1000@gmail.com</u> if you want to join this effort.

Trout Unlimited volunteers have mowed an angler path on 3/4 of a mile of the South Fork of the Root River above and below the Hwy. 12 bridge southeast of Lanesboro.

This stretch formerly was overgrown with invasive trees and brush that a TU contractor removed two years ago. Unfortunately, a bumper crop of tall, and in some cases toxic, weeds emerged in the cleared area. The mowing program led by TU's Win-Cres Chapter aims to retain access to the stretch through summer weed thickets that reach seven feet in height. The path starts at the low bridge on Apple Drive and continues on state forest land above the Million Dollar Bridge.



Mowing crew volunteers, from left, Alan Lundstrom, Mike Jeresek, Lou George, and Michael Tanguay, worked to clear a path before the weeds reached their mid-summer heights.

Clean Water Coalition hosted "Resource in Crisis" on May 22

By Caroline van Schaik, Clean Water Coalition of Winona County/ Will Dilg chapter, IWLA

An alarming rate of nitrate contamination in karst region drinking water was the focus of a forum May 22, 2023 on what organizers called, "A Resource in Crisis". The forum, held in Lewiston, MN, brought in 120 mostly-rural residents and featured speakers who addressed the issue from the point of view of anglers as well as recreation/economic, chemical, human health, and legal consequences.

Organizers are members of the Clean Water Coalition of Winona County, which includes Trout Unlimited Minnesota (TU), the League of Women Voters/Winona (LWV), Minnesota Well Owners Organization (MNWOO), Will Dilg chapter/Izaak Walton League (IWLA), and Land Stewardship Project (LSP).



Coverage of the forum by 2 TV stations includes:

 $\frac{https://www.kttc.com/2023/05/25/rural-communities-struggle-with-contaminated-drinking-water/}{and}$

https://www.kimt.com/video/groups-host-town-hall-over-water-quality-concerns-in-southeast-minnesota/video b86d0e35-ea86-580b-b5f1-69cbb198a7a1.html.

The 8-county Driftless region is at the heart of a petition to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for emergency intervention to safeguard drinking water from municipal and private well sources. Submitted in April, the request argues that persistent nitrate contamination of drinking water risks the health of 380,000 residents and that standing laws are not being effectively administered by state and local regulators. Conventional row crop agriculture and animal feedlots are the principal sources of contamination, according to research by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The petition was submitted by the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) and 10 other organizations, including TU Minnesota, MNWOO, IWLA Minnesota, and LSP. If you want to sign onto a call for action, MCEA is collecting signatures here for the EPA petition. A good newspaper article on the issue is here. For a summary of the petition, email the Clean Water Coalition. (Cleanwatercoalitionwinona@gmail.com).



A few points from the May 22 presentations:

• "Of all water woes, drinking water is tops," said Paul Wotzka, MNWOO; 19% of tested private wells in the Driftless region register nitrates more than the EPA standard of 10 ppm, he said.

- A growing body of credible research concludes that multiple cancer risks appear well below the 10 ppm EPA standard even as we are exposed to increasing rates of nitrates, said Dr. Aleta Borrud, retired Mayo physician.
- There is a direct relation between nitrate and pesticide contamination, stemming as they do from the same land use practices.
- A high density of sinkholes, characteristic of karst topography in the Driftless region, correlates with high levels of nitrates in tested wells because of the unpredictable limestone cracks that serve as a highway for contaminants from surface to groundwater.
- Olmsted County has financial incentives for farmers and landowners to encourage water-protecting soil practices known to reduce and filter out contaminants.

Flyfishing Women of Minnesota By Sally Noll, Chair FFWNMN

The club had a very busy spring with fishing events and some training of volunteers in casting instruction, Fly Fishing 101 and 201 sessions for members and collaborations with

Dakota County Parks to teach an introduction to fly-fishing and fly tying. Thanks to Monta Hayner and the casting volunteers and students to increase our capacity to help out other members in their learning journey, and Monta Hayner, Cindy Winslow, Linda Radimecky and Grace Glander for volunteering their time to teach interested women.

Over 16 members stayed at Natures Nook near Viroqua in mid-May and were introduced to the wonderful streams in southwestern Wisconsin. Attendees included a mix of experienced, intermediate and beginners. Fishing around town events at Lake Phalen and Holland Lake did not net

many fish but were good opportunities to practice casting on the water! Thanks again to the

many volunteers for getting these events organized and carried out!

Planning continues for future "Fishing Around Town" events and the annual fall get together. Keep an eye on our website for updates at https://flyfishingwomenmn.com





Terrestrial Time

By Jason Rieke



A beautiful brown trout on a chernobyl chubby

Terrestrial time in the driftless can be one of the most entertaining times to target trout on the surface. In our neck of the woods, the terrestrial season typically starts during the end of May/early June and can run through the middle of October. When the conditions are right, trout can be very willing to shoot out of their bankside cover and aggressively eat your grasshopper or beetle imitation. On the other hand, when it's 80°F and humid, you are being constantly attacked by gnats, and the tall grass along the stream keeps catching your fly, it can be a tough outing. Either way, the visual aspect of a terrestrial eat is one of my favorites and makes terrestrial fishing a very fun option for a summer day on a trout stream.

Flies and Gear:

In fly fishing, the word "terrestrial" is a fairly broad term grasshoppers, beetles, ants, and anything else that can end up in a trout falling into the water and trout will actively (and at times combatively) eat them. Some of my favorite patterns are Morrish Hoppers, Foam





Beetles, Foam Ants, Chernobyl Chubbies, Hippie Stompers, and the classic Stimulator. As far as fly rods go, your typical 9' 5wt is a perfect match for throwing these bugs. Pair that with a 9' 3-4X leader and you are good to go. One last tip - Mucilin (red container) is my favorite floatant for any fly with foam in it. In my opinion, it seems to work better for me on foam than other dry fly floatants.

Where/How to Fish:

Realistically, every stream in the driftless will have some sort of terrestrial bug near its banks and terrestrials can be fished there. However, certain streams will be better than others. My favorite stretches to look for are along small to medium sized creeks that have plenty of tall grass along the banks. Opportunistic trout will sit in areas where bugs are likely to fall in or float down to them. I find that spots with a combination of current. depth, and overhanging grass can be the ticket.





A couple of great creeks for throwing a terrestrial fly pattern

Typically, fishing terrestrials during mid-morning and later in the afternoon is more productive than fishing them in the middle of the day. When fishing in current, a great way to elicit an bite is to slap the terrestrial down fairly hard, right along the bank. On smaller streams, I have seen fish move 10' from one side of a bank to the other side of the bank to eat a hopper that was slapped down in this fashion. Also, as the fly floats down, I like to give the fly a little wiggle if I can. If the fish are more spooky or are not reacting well to the slap, fishing them with a softer landing and dead-drifting can be effective as well. On bigger water when fish are not eating on top as frequently, I will oftentimes tie on a nymph dropper or trail a smaller dry fly behind a terrestrial. This can be deadly and can produce doubles at times.

The Fish:

Over the years I have caught some really cool fish with terrestrials including my first tiger trout on the fly and many other pretty brook and brown trout. There is also the opportunity to hook into some very hefty fish that are

> looking for an easy meal.



Tiger trout on a Grasshopper Pattern

Colorful brown trout caught on a Chernobyl Chubby at dusk

Save Our Streams Workshop

By Caroline van Schaik, Will Dilg chapter/IWLA

TU members from near and far participated in a workshop in Winona May 20, 2023 to learn the water monitoring protocols known as Save Our Streams (SOS). The chemical, physical, and biological methods designed by the Izaak Walton League (IWLA) 50-plus years ago compliment TU's WiseH2O with the added benefit of having a national data base for all results.

The free workshop was organized by the Winona Will Dilg chapter of IWLA in collaboration with Win-Cres and Hiawatha TU chapters. Participants have the option of becoming SOS-certified through the national IWLA site; certification is not required but it does allow a stream monitor to enter SOS sampling data.

Several TU trainees have already passed their tests and have joined SOS teams to monitor established sites in Whitewater State Park and on Mill Creek in Chatfield. Rush Creek in Rushford will have a new team of just-trained monitors. And participants from the Twin Cities Stream Keepers plan to pull together a biological test kit to conduct macro invertebrate sampling beginning in the fall.

The Will Dilg chapter hosts eight sampling sites in the Driftless region, purchasing supplies as funds permit and organizing spring and fall teams of monitors. For more information, please contact Caroline van Schaik,



ccvs428@gmail.com, or Barry Drazkowski, bdrazkow@gmail.com.

Fly of The Month: FrogShank Redemption

By Paul Krolak, HTU Board member

We've got a wealth of fishing opportunities in the midwest – and during the warm days of summer, especially with what seems to be a drought starting and low water levels - it's best to leave the trout alone for a while in all but the coldest of our streams. I worked up this fly pattern after watching how frogs swim - and so I could fish heavy cover without getting hung up very often. With a counter-weighted Ahrex GB Swimbait hook and an articulated bulky head, this fly has both a good froggy profile and a shape that allows it to work thru weeds and obstacles - it'll pretty much bounce off the obstacles. It also casts pretty easily.



The FrogShank will glide and suspend in the water, and it'll work in streams or lakes. Size the hook and shank up for a bigger target. Change the color scheme to your favorite combination. Use deer body hair when tying the head for a more buoyant fly, bucktail if you want it to suspend deeper.

I've had lots of fun on trout streams tossing one of these up against the banks at sunset. Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass, Pike, Muskie and the occasional crappie have all eaten it too.

For more information on reverse tying bucktail - look for Gunnar Brammer on YouTube.

Hook: Ahrex PR378 GB Predator Swimbait

Shank: 1" FTD Shank

Bucktail Saddle Hackle NMF Titan Dubbing 1/4" Body Tubing UV Cure Resin

https://youtu.be/WIoZVqejBMA

Monthly Fishing Reports

Lanesboro MN: Root River Rod Co

June has been a great month for dry fly fishing. We have had a great Brown Drake hatch that is just coming to an end. The sulphurs are starting to show up and we are seeing lots of small grasshoppers. It's time to load up on Mini Hippie Stompers and run a Hopper dropper rig.

Evening Caddis have been good across most streams in the last 2-3 hours of daylight. We should see a Hexagenia hatch any day now. I would recommend using a thermometer in the daytime now since we are experiencing high 80s and not a lot of rain so most of the streams are running low and clear. We also recommend covering yourself in good solar clothing and be careful of the wild parsnip as it is almost head high now.

Flies recommended:

Mini Hippie Stomper #10 Brown Drake #6 Elk Hair Caddis #16 Hexagenia #6 Copper John #18-14

Decorah IA: Bear Creek Anglers

Again this year and summer, we find ourselves with less precipitation than anticipated and hoped for. Our streams and rivers are yet again struggling to maintain solid water levels with the lack of rain but, if approached at the right time of day and by avoiding the hottest times of day, fishing is still solid and safe for catch and release of our trout.

Caddis, march browns, and midge hatches are still prevalent, and don't forget to hit it early and late in the day with trico patterns as summer rolls on. Caddis can be effective in sizes 14-16, march browns in 12-16, and midge and tricos in sizes 18-22.

Sub-surface activity stays effective with any nymph fished in size 16-20--typical pheasant tails, prince nymph, hare's ear, and midge patterns should find fish. Flies with emerger effects using CDC or even basic soft hackles such as partridge and orange tend to be effective, as well. Find colder water and cooler temps to fish and you will have success as well as safer conditions for proper C&R.

Fishing caddis droppers with a nymph below is a solid go-to this time of year, and as we get deeper into summer, think about terrestrials such as hoppers, beetles, ants, and hybrid terrestrial patterns.

Win-Cres will have a booth at the July 12-16 Winona County Fair. Board members are asked to contact Roger Berg for times you might be available to assist.

Upcoming Events Schedule:

Win-Cres Chapter: July 12-16 Booth at Winona County fair at 506 W 6th St, St Charles, MN

Resources:

SE Stream Conditions (MN DNR)

State Map Trout Streams (MN DNR)

Southeast Streams (MN DNR)

AMA (MN DNR Aquatic Management Areas)

WMA (MN DNR Wildlife Management Areas)

SNA (MN DNR Scientific and Natural Areas)

State Forest (MN lands)

Driftless Hatch Chart (Driftless Region)

MN DNR Fish Kills Reporting (or call 651-649-5451 or 800-422-0798)

Trout-In-the-Classroom Map (School Locations in MN)

Wisconsin DNR Trout Streams

Iowa DNR Driftless Trout Stream Maps

IA WMA (IA DNR Wildlife Management Areas)

HTU's Iowa Driftless Stream Map

HTU Website: https://hiawatha-tu.org

TCTU Website: https://www.twincitiestu.org/

TCTU Events: https://www.twincitiestu.org/events.html

2023 MN DNR Driftless Stream Projects Map

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