



TU Western Driftless Hotline



Editorial by Carl Berberich

In last month's newsletter we informed our subscribers about the petition MNTU filed to Minnesota's Dept. of Agriculture. This petition requires a 60-day response and is about the neonic insecticides that coats almost all of the seed corn and seed soy-beans that farmers buy for their crops. The following is a summarization of an article that John Weiss published in the Rochester Post Bulletin in 2023 about that subject. These neonics insecticides have been going on for years and has greatly impacted our aquatic insect populations of our trout streams. This in turn affects our trout populations, because they are directly impacted by their lack of food sources.

John Weiss article

Canfield Creek drifted in front of me, quiet, clear. Several brown trout flexed in the soft current.

For decades, that stream in Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park has lured me with its beauty and those trout have eluded me with their wiles. A few weeks, however, Canfield was different because I've learned that neonicotinoids, a relatively new pesticide, are increasing in many of our waters, possibly killing our vital water invertebrates (bugs).

My research began several weeks ago when I watched a state team collect bugs in Canfield's nearby near-twin Forestville Creek, using them as an indicator of water quality; that, in turn, would indicate what similar streams are like. I read a lot, talked with experts and found that saying our flowing waters are better or worse is exasperating because water quality is maddeningly hard to pin down.

But pollutant maps of the Zumbro, Root and Whitewater watersheds from maybe 10 years ago all show a dismaying number of impaired stretches, many with multiple woes. New testing is being done to update them. I'd love to believe our waters will show a massive improvement, but I have little faith in that dream.

My research also came in part because over the past few years, I've found evidence that there's fewer of the bugs in our streams and rivers.

The National Weather Service has been documenting the huge hatches of larger mayflies on the Mississippi River and says hatches have dropped by about 50 percent in the last decade or so. About a dozen avid trout angler friends have been saying for years that hatches are way down.

Dr. Neal Mundahl, a Winona State University expert on bugs and streams wrote in a recent Minnesota Trout Unlimited magazine: "In my 30+ years of monitoring stream communities in

southeastern Minnesota, I've wondered why different types of stoneflies, mayflies, amphipods, and even snails seem to have vanished from some streams where they used to be abundant."

The culprit, he believes, is neonics.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture also sees potential problems with them. Two kinds of neonics - clothianidin and imidacloprid - are now on the state's list of five surface water pesticides of concern. The five made up 95 to 97 percent of pesticides detected over reference values, according to the MDA's 2022 Water Quality Monitoring Report.

Clothianidin, shows up most in the Southeast - 49 percent in one test, 61 percent in another; imidacloprid shows up most in urban areas because it's in so many household pest killers. A 2022 study in the Root River watershed found clothianidin in all 19 samples; 18 were above the federal chronic benchmark.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency has set benchmarks for them, said Dave Tollefson, Surface Water Monitoring Unit supervisor in Rochester in the Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division. Benchmarks are conservative and try to set levels that will not pose an unreasonable risk to aquatic life. It has benchmarks for chronic exposure, which is longer term, and they are lower while acute ones, that can do damage or kill right away, are much higher. Benchmarks can help us interpret data, but a Minnesota specific water quality standard would be necessary to determine if a waterbody violated the Clean Water Act.

Those chemicals can break down quickly so "what we find in the river came from application recently," he said. We should watch for them because "insecticides are by far the most toxic," he said."

Department data shows the percent of clothianidin samples tested above the federal chronic benchmark has risen dramatically in the past several years (except 2021 that was a drought year). Nearly all were found after storms.

The MDA has the authority to regulate pesticides in the state, including the neonics. However, pesticide-treated seeds are not considered pesticides, but rather treated articles, which are regulated by the EPA.

With its and MDA data, the MPCA develops and enforces water quality standards. The MPCA has noted the need for the neonicotinoid water quality standards, but other chemicals, including polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as "forever chemicals," have a higher priority, he said.

Nitrates aren't new but they are a persistent pollutant because they are really bad in drinking water and might be a stressor of life in streams and rivers. They are also seen as a good indicator chemical - if they are in water, other pollutants are probably with them.

Just how bad they are isn't perfectly understood, according to Michael Rafferty, MPCA communications manager. "It is likely that in fish (and other vertebrates), nitrate reduces the efficiency that oxygen is carried in the blood," he said.

Middle Branch Zumbro River water tested for nitrates for nearly two decades were looking bleak for nearly a decade. In the past few years, maybe because of drought, maybe because of more careful farming, readings are lower.

Finally, a study found the Zumbro, Root and Whitewater watersheds, averaged 89 percent good to fair/good for fish but only 56 percent good to fair/good for bugs. The difference is probably that silt covers the riffles where the invertebrates live. River sediment not only looks horrid, but it is also bad for the water.

I'm not saying all is bleak.

Water monitoring data show drops in phosphorus and sediment from runoff. Trout streams are in good condition overall despite the chemicals. From 1973 to 2008, turbidity, phosphorus, ammonia and biochemical oxygen demand (a measure of stuff in waters that take up oxygen), all dropped dramatically. Since then, however, only turbidity continued to improve.

Hiawatha TU November

By John Weiss, HTU Board member

About a dozen of us met at 125 Live with Kristen Poppleton, new assistant director of MNTU who spoke via ZOOM

She introduced herself, saying she's been an avid outdoorswoman all her life, and spent a lot of time in Ely and the BWCA. "I love water in all its forms," she said. But her roots are in the SE and she was married in a church in Vasa, a tiny Goodhue County town. Her career has been spent with energy and environmental groups and more recently came from Climate Generation.

She said the state chapter is an umbrella group for the five local chapters including Hiawatha. The motto is the Protect, Restore and Sustain cold water fisheries (I've always thought in a key thing that it doesn't mention fishing directly). Her role is more to protect and sustain with education.

Poppleton noted that the SE streams are in much better shape than NE because of our springs while the NE doesn't have them. In the north-central part, the problem is more of a push to more agriculture.

Southeast key problems:

1. Feedlots
2. Ag runoff and leaching
3. Pesticides including neonics.
4. Sedimentation
5. Climate change, though our springs help moderate that
6. Ground water contamination.

She added that heavy rains after putting on manure are another side of climate change.

Many fish kills (not natural die offs) are a human-caused event.

What makes the problems worse is our karst topography that intimately connects surface and ground water. And our steep slopes add even more of a concern.

She mentioned neonics - TU is part of a group that is asking the state to better control neonics that are a relatively new problem that can directly kill bugs in streams. Interesting, 97 percent of deer spleens checked across the state had neonics in them. Making it more pressing, data show that the majority of farmers who plant seeds coated with neonics get no benefit; some gain, and some lose. Mayfly larvae are especially sensitive, and their numbers are dropping. Yet we need all the regulations.

Poppleton stressed that TU loves members to contact those in power - elected or members of state and federal agencies. **BUT DON'T SEND FORM LETTERS.** Instead, write your own thoughts and how they affect you and your fishing and maybe your children. Make it personal; one good personal letter is better than 100 form letters. She stressed "this is not something that is anti-farmer." Other states are also looking at similar bans and the European Union has a total ban "and they have no trouble growing food," she said.

How about controlling tiling? It makes neonics worse because, but we have no controls. There was a push to do that in the last session, but nothing came of it. There could be incremental change.

One good thing was showing that change could come such as getting the federal EPA to demand that the state do better with nitrates. This fall, there will be a change in how feedlots are regulated and what need to be done better with time of application.



"It's all about ag and how it impacts our water and fish," she said. When she began, she thought her main job would deal more with fish and streams but it's more with cow poop.

She again stressed TU is pro-farmer and wants to help them get money to control waste.

Finally, Trout in Classroom will begin with egg delivery Dec. 11. There are about a dozen schools, mostly in Rochester, that work with that program.

TCTU September News

By Bob Luck, President of TCTU

If you haven't made it to Iowa or one of the towns or state parks that are open for fishing in Minnesota, I hope you get a chance! There is also a bunch of other stuff going on this month:

Our **November chapter meeting** will be held on November 25th in person and via Zoom. Kasey Yallaly of the Wisconsin DNR will be talking about Trout Sampling: How, Why and What Do We Learn? Register [here](#).

The 2nd Annual TCTU **Black Friday Trash Day** will be held on November 29. Join us on Black Friday, burn off those pie calories and take action to make our streams better for everyone and everything. Pick up trash along a stretch of Hay Creek. In 2023 we filled +20 bags of trash! Details and Registration are [here](#).

Board nominations. We are soliciting nominations for the TCTU Board! Check out our [website](#) for a nomination form.

Merch! We've reopened our TCTU Merch Shop just in time for holiday shopping. In addition to the crowd favorites from previous seasons, we've added many new items.

Be sure to get your orders in before the store closes for the season on Saturday, November 30th. Link to the store is [here](#).



Win-Cres Happenings

By Mark Reisetter Win-Cres Board member
Tom Stevens, secretary

Regarding habitat work in October: Tom Stevens cut willows and Chuck Shepard treated them along Garvin Brook to avoid a resurgence of the tree. On October 17 Trevor and Jennifer Biederman (plus family), Carl Berberich, Neal Mundahl, Dave Schulz, Dave Shaffer, Chuck Shepard, Gary Janzen, and Tom Stevens planted shrubbery along Cedar Valley Creek.

The following general meetings will be held at Sobieski Lodge on East 7th St. The speakers will be:

December 4 – author Bob Trevis will share his new book regarding trout fishing in SEMN
January 22 – Jim Melander will review his years in the DNR

These meetings are open to the public. Social hours begin at 6:00 p.m. with the presentations at 7:00.

Thank you to Jennifer Biederman, Ph.D., the statewide habitat director of Minnesota Trout Unlimited for her presentation at our October 23 general meeting. Dr. Biederman spoke about” MNTU Outdoor Heritage Habitat Program, a Year-in-Review and a preview of 2025 habitat initiatives.

Dave Shaffer, the Win-Cres representative to MNTU Habitat Committee shared information regarding the October 22 Zoom meeting. A chair for the committee will be determined at a later meeting. Dave related that the MNTU staff consider this committee a way to share information among chapters, discuss volunteer opportunities on Legacy-funded habitat projects and share ideas for future projects.

Dave Schulz reported on the possible September 12-14, 2025, Whitewater Veterans Day event. Win-Cres is not the lead agency but will support the project as in the past. The next Win-Cres board meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. December 11 at the VFW.

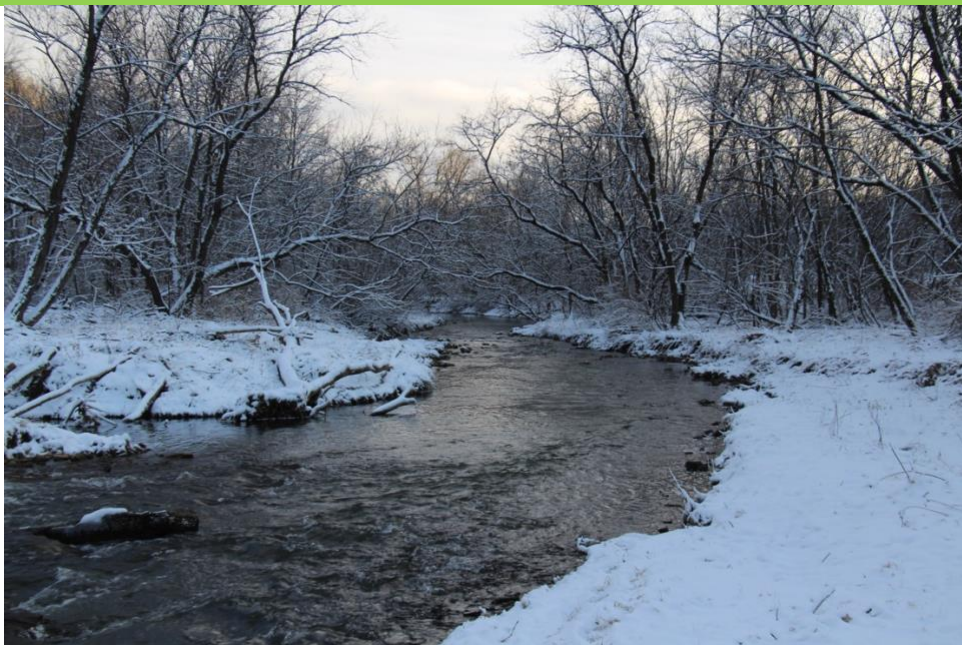
Iowa Driftless Chapter

By Mike Rogers, President

Next chapter meeting will be December 3, 2024 @ 7pm @ Pulpit Rock Brewery in Decorah, Iowa. Please come and hear an intro presentation from Bear Creek Archaeology followed by normal business meeting content to follow.

Winter is on the Horizon

By Jason Rieke



11/20/24 - A few [windshield wipers were flipped](#) up when I pulled into the parking lot this morning. I made note that this was a little strange. After I walked into the building, I forgot all

about it. Then, around 9am, I looked out the window and saw the first few snowflakes of the 2024-2025 winter season. Winter snuck up on me and I had no idea it was coming! During my lunch break, I drove to a local fishing hole in Chatfield and fished for 10 mins. That was about as long as I could stand it. I was not layered well and the 30° air temperature, combined with a bone chilling wind, kicked my butt. I got skunked and couldn't feel my fingers when I hopped back into the car. So goes winter trout fishing at times.

Around here, winter stretches out for a long time. To many, this is a season to stay inside and dream about warmer days. To a select few, winter can be a “[secret season](#)” where beauty and solitude is found. For those anglers who prepare well enough to endure the elements, rewarding fishing can be had. And with the right gear and a willingness to get a little cold, winter trout fishing can even be quite enjoyable. Look back at the [November 2023 issue of the TU Western Driftless Hotline](#) for a few tips to get you started and buffer the potential misery of winter trout fishing. Layer up, keep moving, be willing to get skunked at times, and embrace the suck. Most of all, if you have an itch to fish - just go. We probably have 4 more months of this.

Be safe and have fun out there this winter.

Fly of The Month: Primordial Caro Stew

By Lance Prado, HTU Board Member



Thinking back to warmer times the fly of the month is Primordial Caro Stew which Part Two of our carp fly tying series. This is a great fly that is also a universal crawfish pattern just tie it in a different color. Simple, easy and effective.

Things you will need to create this fly:

Fulling Mill Bonio Hook #10

Bead Chain Eyes Med

Grizzly Micro Rubber Legs - Root Beer

Cohen Carp Dubbing Olive

Fulling Mill Micro Zonker Strip

Red Veevus 6/0 Thread

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNx7pjmJ0s0&t=2s>

Monthly Fishing Reports

Lanesboro MN: [Root River Rod Co](#)

I would like to start by saying that Root River Rod Co is giving away a Free Sage Sonic Fly Rod! To enter is simple. Just head to [Rootriverrodco.com](#) and follow the pop up. The winner will be chosen randomly Dec 25 Via email. This is a \$675 value and it's completely free to enter.

Fishing Report:

Fly Fishing in SE MN Designated water has been great lately with lots of big fish being caught "Just check out Instagram and FB page". Midges and Blue Wings are out and are even bringing fish to the surface still which has been fun to fish this late in the season. Nymphing is also working well. Scuds, Zebra Midges,

Pheasant tails and Hares Ears have been good for us. Streamers have been working great for brown trout since it has been their time for spawning. We have been seeing a ton of fish on their spawning beds "Redds" which is a great sign for the future.

Flies Recommended:

Black Zebra Midge #18-22

Pink Scud #18-16

Dorsey Midge #18-22

Pheasant Tail #14-18

Hares Ear #14-18

Micro Dungeon White and Olive

Peanut Eny, White, Black and Olive

Wooly Bugger Black #10-8



Decorah IA: [Bear Creek Anglers](#)

Dry Flies—BWO patterns, Adam's, Griffiths gnats and other midge patterns in sizes 18-22.

Emergers—fish small BWO emergers and midge emergers (size 18-20). Colors—olive, dark olive, black, purple, grey with emerging wings. A combo of crystal flash with cdc makes for good action and flash.

Nymphs—favorites are pheasant tail, hare's ear, prince nymph (these nymphs do well with hot spot/collars in red/orange/pink), scuds in orange/tan/grey/pink (pink squirrels are a great choice, too). Zebra midges in colors red, tan, and black in sizes 16-20, caddis larva and also cased caddis in sizes 14-18.

Streamers/Jigs—large and chunky streamers, both articulated and not can be great during this time of year. Change your retrieval techniques, pauses, strips, etc. Favorite colors for any of these will be black, brown, dark or olive green, and yellow. For smaller leech patterns, a favorite this time of year, go with size 10-14 Mayer's Mini Leech patterns, which can also be very effective in a dead drift.

Upcoming Events Schedule:

TCTU Chapter meeting will be held on November 25th in person and via Zoom. Kasey Yallaly of the Wisconsin DNR will be talking about Trout Sampling: How, Why and What Do We Learn? Register [here](#).

Hiawatha TU Members Holiday Potluck: Dec 2, 6 pm at the Olmsted History Center in Rochester

Iowa Driftless Chapter: Dec 3 @ 7pm @ Pulpit Rock Brewery in Decorah, Iowa

WinCres TU Chapter Meeting: Dec 4 general meeting and open to the public at Sobieski Lodge on East 7th St. Winona with author Bob Trevis

WinCres TU Chapter Meeting: Jan 22, with DNR Jim Melander

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>

Fly Fishing Women of Minnesota Website: <https://flyfishingwomenmn.com/>