



Steps to Start a New Trout Unlimited Chapter

You are probably reading this because you are interested in taking on the exciting and rewarding responsibility of forming a Trout Unlimited (TU) chapter. Thank you. TU's grassroots members working through local chapters do precisely what the name implies: you root our work in the watersheds, communities and river beds of our mission.

Cultivation and formation of new chapters is critical to the health of the TU; however, it is not always the easiest task to undertake and requires a strong supporting foundation of both an adequate number of active members and sufficient start-up funding to succeed. Therefore, it is of great value to have a strong mentor in the form of your council and/or a nearby chapter to assist during the formative stages. Additionally, some may find appealing the idea of operating as a subordinate group of a parent chapter or council for a period of time in order to build this important foundation before undertaking the formal charter process. If this is of interest, please read the Board of Trustees approved document, [“New TU Chapter Development Concept.”](#)

The objective of this document; however, is to provide guidelines and resources to help you set-up a TU chapter, which at its essence is simply a group of members in a local area given a charter by TU's Board of Trustees. Each TU chapter is unique based on its specific context, geography, membership and history.¹ There is no one size fits all; although, there are a few things every chapter has in common². For one, all TU members are assigned by ZIP code to a chapter and are entitled to the benefits of chapter membership which normally includes receiving the chapter newsletter or e-newsletter and invitations to chapter meetings, events or projects.³ And, to be chartered, every TU chapter must contain at least 12 TU members in good standing and a six-member board of directors.

Establishing a new chapter takes place through the following application process and should involve working closely with your TU state council and [Volunteer Operations staff](#). In order to have a chapter proposed to national TU Board of Directors for charter, the following documentation must be submitted (e-mail is preferred) to [Volunteer Operations staff](#):

- 1. Chapter name:** The officers and members should select a name for the chapter that suggests consideration of geographical locale, local streams, rivers, names of well-known fishing personalities, etc... The chapter name may not be the same nor too similar to that of a pre-existing chapter. A chapter may also request a three digit number to correlate with the chapter name if that number isn't currently assigned to another chapter.
- 2. Minutes of the first public meeting.** A record of topics, events and attendees should be submitted after the first meeting of the soon to be chartered chapter. Again, electronic submission is encouraged.
- 3. A list of the chapter's officers and directors:** This list must include complete mailing addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. The minimum requirement is for a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, (a combined secretary/treasurer position is acceptable) and three directors. Additionally, all officers must be active members in good standing of TU.
- 4. Chapter bylaws:** Chapter bylaws must be signed by chapter officers and submitted for approval. Model chapter bylaws are found in [the online Tacklebox](#). Please note that we will need scanned copies that have been signed and dated. All bylaws should be approved by the local council (if applicable) prior to submission.

¹ Chapters range in geographic size from a single watershed to an entire state and in membership size from less than 20 to over 5,000.

² Read [TU's Leadership Manual](#) for more information about our structure, history and common attributes of effective chapters.

³ Members may belong to a chapter outside of their normal ZIP code assigned chapter upon request. According to [TU's bylaws](#), Article II, Section 3: “All members in good standing of TU residing within the boundaries of a chapter area shall be automatically assigned to the membership roster(s) of that chapter and be members thereof. However, any member so assigned to an area chapter may request to be reassigned to any other chapter of choice regardless of location.”



Steps to Start a New Trout Unlimited Chapter

5. **Chapter territory listings:** Please reach out to the [Volunteer Operations staff](#), and we will send you a spreadsheet containing a listing of current chapter ZIP code assignments. If the new chapter falls within a council's territory, the council is responsible for assigning ZIP codes, and by association members, to your chapter. Please work closely with the council leadership to determine appropriate chapter boundaries. We also ask that the council clarify whether or not existing members living in the assigned ZIPs be moved automatically upon charter or whether it is preferred that only new members living in these ZIPs be assigned to the new chapter. As always, members may request to be assigned to your chapter regardless of zip code by e-mailing trout@tu.org or calling 1-800-834-2419. Chapter boundaries are not to cross state or national borders unless specific approval is granted by the national Board of Trustees.

After Chapter Charter Requirements:

1. **Fundraising event:** A new chapter is required to hold a fundraising event within the first 18 months of receiving their chapter charter.
2. **Employer Identification Number (EIN) application SS-4:**⁴ [To file for a new EIN, click here](#). This is a quick and simple online process; however, there are a few things you'll need to know:
 - ✓ First, the National EIN is 38-1612715.
 - ✓ Next, on this screen shot below... click "Started a new business."

- ✓ Then on this next screen, click "existing business" and enter the 'national' EIN.

⁴ Because TU is a publicly supported 501(c)3 organized under a group exemption, each chapter (and council) is required to have their own employer identification number (EIN) and file their own 990 forms with the IRS.



Steps to Start a New Trout Unlimited Chapter

- ✓ Finally on this screen, enter your start date as today.

The screenshot shows the IRS EIN Assistant interface. At the top, the IRS.gov logo is on the left, and 'Help | Apply for New EIN | Exit' is on the right. Below this is a progress bar with five steps: 1. Identify ✓, 2. Authenticate ✓, 3. Addresses ✓, 4. Details, and 5. EIN Confirmation. The main heading is 'Tell us about the Non-Profit/Tax-Exempt Organization.' Below this, there are several required fields: 'Legal name of Non-Profit/Tax-Exempt Organization' with the value '581 - Juneau Chapter'; 'Trade name/Doing business as (only if different from legal name)' which is empty; 'County where Non-Profit/Tax-Exempt Organization is located' with the value 'JUNEAU'; 'State/Territory where Non-Profit/Tax-Exempt Organization is located' with a dropdown menu showing 'ALASKA (AK)'; and 'Non-Profit/Tax-Exempt Organization start date' with a 'Select Month' dropdown and a 'Year' input field. A note states: 'Before continuing, please review the information above for typographical errors.' At the bottom right, there is a 'Continue >>' button.

The system will give you an EIN once you've filled everything out. Once you get that, be sure to inform [Volunteer Operations staff](#) immediately.

For submission of these documents, please [e-mail](#), mail or fax (703.284.9400) attachments along with the following letter of transmittal to [Volunteer Operations staff](#).



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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL:

Date:

TU

Attn: Volunteer Operations
1777 N. Kent St. Ste. 100
Arlington, VA 22209

To Whom It May Concern:

Please add the _____ Chapter, headquartered in _____, to the list of chapters to be approved and chartered at the next meeting of the national TU Board of Directors. The attached documents attest to the eligibility of this chapter for chartering:

1. Minutes of the first public meeting.
2. A list of chapter officers and directors.
3. A complete set of signed and dated chapter bylaws, approved by the chapter's council (if applicable.)
4. A spreadsheet of the new chapter's assigned territory (by zip-code) with a letter of approval from the council chair.

After all the above paperwork has been accepted and the charter approved by the national TU Board of Trustees, I understand we will be responsible for sending Volunteer Operations staff the following:

1. Confirmation and brief description of the chapter's first fundraising event (within 18 months of charter.)
2. A copy of the confirmation letter of EIN assignment from the IRS.

Sincerely,

Chapter President

(Enclosures)