

How to Count A TU Volunteer Hour

Trout Unlimited's strategic plan outlines four major areas of our mission: Protect, Reconnect, Restore and Sustain. Your chapter or council's activities and volunteer hours will fall within these four categories. The following glossary helps define each of these categories and sub-categories and also provides examples of the types of volunteer hours which should be counted in each category.

Types of Volunteer Hours

Conservation Hours

Trout Unlimited's mission is defined by our watershed-based approach to conservation. We recognize that in order to improve water quality and protect native and wild trout populations we must protect the best remaining places – most often in small headwater tributaries, reconnect streams that have been disconnected by dams, culverts and other barriers and restore downstream areas which have been degraded by development, agriculture or other human or natural processes.

Protect

Protect efforts are projects and activities which provide critical land protection within a watershed which in turn improves or protects water quality and stream flows as well as efforts to strengthen programs or management plans which protect water or trout populations.

Examples of protect projects or activity hours might include:

- Securing long-term protections for important public lands
- Working with land trusts to protect private land vital for trout or salmon
- Protecting key watersheds from development that damages habitat
- Working with state agencies to protect the genetic integrity of native fish (e.g., hatchery reform, invasive species management)

Reconnect

Reconnect efforts are projects and activities which reconnect sections of stream to improve or provide fish passage within a watershed.

Examples of reconnect projects or activity hours might include:

- Removing dams and culverts
- Building fish ladders and bypass channels to allow migration of fish
- Campaigns to promote water conservation and adequate river flows for fish passage

Restore

Restore efforts are projects and activities which improve degraded areas of stream to enhance habitat for trout and other aquatic species. Restore projects are the most common conservation activity of TU chapters and councils.

Examples of restore projects or activity hours might include:

- Stream cleanups
- Riparian buffer plantings of native plant species
- In-stream habitat construction projects

Sustain Hours

Trout Unlimited sustains our work by building volunteer capacity to execute projects that support the conservation plan, informing TU members and the community at large on the importance of coldwater conservation, investing in youth to ensure the perpetuation of TU's mission through future generations, gathering information and data to advise our work and raising funds to support all aspects of our work.

Advocacy

TU advocates for coldwater protections and a range of mission-related topics on a regular basis. Advocacy activity is most often associated with state council efforts. While chapters and councils must use caution when entering into specific lobbying activities related to a specific bill or piece of legislation, this type of activity is permitted when it does not constitute a "substantial part" of the chapter or council's total hours or expenditures. *(If you are active in lobbying efforts, or considering lobbying, please contact Volunteer Operations staff to discuss the restrictions and limitations you must follow to protect TU's 501(c)3 status.)*

Examples of advocacy projects or activity hours might include:

- Speaking at your local state capital in support or opposition to a specific piece of legislation (such as a riparian buffer bill or statewide water management plan)
- Hosting a "TU Day at the Capitol" to engage and educate lawmakers about your chapter or council's activities, mission and legislative priorities
- Writing letters of support or opposition to local or state agencies regarding specific development proposals

Science

Science efforts are projects and activities which help gather data and information which can be used in your conservation, advocacy and community outreach work.

Examples of science projects or activity hours might include:

- Water temperature monitoring
- Culvert assessments
- Macroinvertebrate population studies

Communications

Communications efforts are vital to the growth and strength of a chapter or council and its ability to be successful in our mission. A chapter or council that communicates effectively is better positioned to attract new members, engage existing members, bring volunteers out to help and more.

Examples of communications activity hours might include:

- Electronic communications such as creation and distribution of e-newsletters of the management and updates to a chapter or council website
- Print communications efforts such as the creation and distribution of chapter hard-mail newsletters and postcards, as well as volunteer time to print and place posters and flyers at fly shops, on community bulletin boards etc...
- Public relations work such as writing and sending press releases and conducting media interviews

Fundraising

Fundraising efforts are activities which help raise money to support the chapter or council's conservation and, education and other mission-related work.

Examples of fundraising activity hours might include:

- Planning and running an annual banquet (including all hours associated with fundraising committee meetings, prize collection and solicitation by volunteers, setting up the banquet hall and the hours that volunteers and leaders spend running the event itself.)
- Writing and distributing an annual appeal donation mailing
- Time spent writing grant applications

Engagement

Engagement efforts are projects and activities that seek to raise awareness of TU and its work, recruit new members, encourage existing members to participate more fully and to diversify the chapter or council's membership and leadership.

Examples of engagement projects or activity hours might include:

- Making presentations to local community groups such as Kiwanis, Lions or Garden Clubs
- Hosting a table or booth at an area fly fishing exhibition or community festival
- Holding chapter fishing trips or hosting a fly fishing film tour to build a sense of community
- Holding events geared towards women or racial minorities
- Participating in veterans programs to honor and support our service men and women
- Hosting fly fishing or fly tying clinics or classes in the community

Youth Education / Outreach

Youth Education & Outreach efforts are projects and activities which engage youth under age 18 in conservation and fishing activities. These activities are essential to the growth of TU and the ability of our chapters and councils to sustain their efforts across generations.

Examples of youth education and outreach projects or activity hours might include:

- Hosting a family fishing event or running a youth education camp
- Running Trout in the Classroom or other school-related youth education programs
- Working with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or other youth-oriented groups

Management & General

Management and general efforts are activities which focus primarily on board operations designed to strengthen and grow the chapter or council capacity to conduct our mission work. If possible, most chapter or council board activity should be assigned to one of the other types of hours listed above and should only be called management or general if it is not connected directly to conservation or other sustain efforts.

Examples of management and general activity hours might include:

- Bylaws review and revision
- Budgeting or financial reporting activity
- Hosting chapter or council training sessions for volunteers on management issues

When to Count an Hour

While it is often easy to know when to count a TU volunteer hour, there are other times when volunteer hours are commonly forgotten or left out of the chapter or council reporting. We want your chapter or council to get credit for ALL the incredible volunteer work you do for TU and the following guidance below should help clarify many of the times your hours can and should be counted.

Counting Volunteer Leader's Hours

There are many common volunteer leader hours which are easy to understand and count, including: attendance at chapter or council board and committee meetings, participation in youth education events or activities, individual time spent by the newsletter editor or webmaster on communications, the treasurer on book-keeping and financial report, the secretary on writing the minutes etc... The following list, however, includes hours that should be counted which are not always easily recognized.

- **Hours spent by chapter or council leaders attending meetings and events** – Volunteer leaders should all have a role to play at a chapter meeting or event, including banquets, such as welcoming and greeting new members, speaking with attendees about the chapter's work, inviting members and guests to volunteer. A chapter meeting or event is a work event for the volunteer leaders and the hours should be counted accordingly.
 - *Example: A chapter meeting is held which is attended by four (4) chapter board members. The meeting lasts 2.5 hours and the board members spend much of the time engaging their members and*

guests in conversation, inviting them to attend other events or encouraging them to volunteer. The total hours which should be counted are 4X2.5 or 10 hours and they should be split among the “Engagement” and “Management & General” categories.

- **Hours spent by chapter or council leaders driving to meetings, events and projects** – Your time volunteering begins the minute you step out of your home or office door and does not end until you return. If you are heading to a board meeting, a membership meeting, a restoration project or a youth education day, the time you spend driving to and from that activity should be counted and should be included in the category for which the event is being held.
 - *Example: You are driving to a youth fishing day event and the drive takes 30 minutes in each direction. You should count 1 hour of time and record it under the “Youth Education & Outreach” category.*
- **Hours spent by a chapter or council leader corresponding by email or phone with members, other leaders, partner groups and more** – Much of TU’s business is conducted in the off-hours between work and bed, or on weekends, when our volunteers have time to get behind their computer and answer questions, respond to inquiries and conduct chapter planning electronically. You should always count these hours. Many volunteer leaders find it helpful to estimate their email and other correspondence time on a monthly basis and to distribute it proportionately across the various categories.
 - *Example: Your chapter is hosting a fly fishing trip for members and guests and all reservations are being emailed to you. Count the hours you spend replying to reservations, responding to questions about proper fishing gear and attire, providing driving directions and more. These hours should be placed in the “Engagement” category.*
 - *Example 2: Your chapter is hosting a fundraising banquet and you use your personal contact list to send invitations to friends by email, reach out to business owners you know requesting donations, communicating with the catering company about the contract and meal choices etc... All of these hours should be counted and placed in the “Fundraising” category.*

Counting Volunteer Member’s Hours

It is fairly easy to calculate most member’s volunteer hours – as these hours typically take place at chapter events such as a restoration project. In that case, you simply count the number of volunteers in attendance (lets assume there were 12 at a planting project) multiply that by the number of hours worked (lets say it was a three-hour project) and your total volunteer hours of 36 hours would be added to the “Restore” category. There are other times, however, when it may not be so easy to count member’s volunteer hours.

- **Hours spent by volunteer members driving to projects where they are volunteering** – Your volunteer member’s time also begins the minute they step out of their home or office to travel to an event at which they will be actively volunteering. You will not know exactly how far each volunteer has driven, but by speaking with the volunteers you can get a general sense of where most of them live and how far away that is from the project or event site. Using that knowledge, you can create a strong estimate of the total number of hours driving time.
 - *Example: At a chapter youth fishing day you have 15 volunteer members agree to serve as casting instructors. You know that five of them live in a town that is 45 minutes away and that five of them live in a town that is 15 minutes away. It is ok to average this and assume that all 15 volunteers live approximately 30 minutes away. Doing the math, then, you would multiply 15 volunteers by one hour total time to and from the event to get a total of 15 volunteer hours to place in the “Youth Engagement & Outreach” category.*

This document provides guidance on how to count your chapter or council’s volunteer hours. If you have specific questions about reporting your volunteer hours, using the Annual Financial Report form or other issues related to volunteer leadership, please contact Jeff Yates, Director of Volunteer Operations at juates@tu.org.