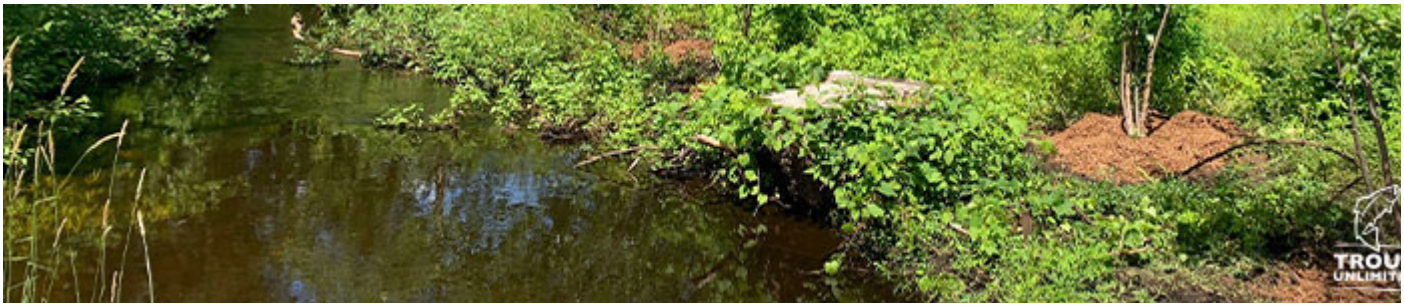


Great Lakes Newsletter 2020

Trout Unlimited continues to increase its efforts in the Great Lakes region. The past year saw a wide range of success across the “Protect, Reconnect, Restore and Sustain” components of our mission.

Projects included habitat restoration of more than 17 miles of high-priority coldwater streams and improving/replacing several barriers to fish passage to open additional habitat. Advocacy efforts focused on critical actions such as keeping invasive Asian carp out of the Great Lakes, while staffers also organized programs to connect with volunteers and to introduce the next generation of coldwater conservationists to the TU mission.

Trout Unlimited President and CEO Chris Wood recently highlighted many of the successes of the Great Lakes team in a blog on the TU web site.

The staff in the region continues to grow to meet the growing demands, with a total of eight full-time staffers now assigned to the region. This year also marks the 10th anniversary of TU’s Home Rivers Initiative on Michigan’s Rogue River. Congratulations to Nichol DeMol, Jamie Vaughan, and all who have contributed to the success of the program for the past decade.

*To stay up to date on Trout Unlimited’s Great Lakes Program, follow us at **facebook.com/GreatLakesTU** and **instagram.com/troutunlimitedgreatlakes**.*

Northern Michigan

It was another active year for TU Great Lakes Stream Restoration staff working in Northern Michigan trout streams.

In 2019, TU worked closely with the Huron-Manistee National Forest and several other partners to complete two road culvert improvement projects to reconnect approximately 10 miles of high-quality coldwater stream habitat.

TU field technicians have been working with the Huron-Manistee National Forest to inventory and manage wood accumulations — such as channel spanning trees and log jams — in trout streams to maximize habitat benefits and provide safe passage for recreationists. We all know that wood is good for trout, but it can be a challenge for paddlers.

A primary focus of this past year's efforts to manage wood has been on the Pere Marquette River, a system hit heavily by the Emerald Ash Borer leading to large stands of dead ash right on the riverbanks. Windstorms and even a tornado increased the number of fallen trees in the river. Repositioning the trees maintains habitat benefits while allowing safe passage.

In a project with high public visibility, TU restored a severely eroded bank of the Manistee River downstream from Tippy Dam. The site on national forest land is popular for trout and salmon anglers, exacerbating erosion.

Also in 2019, TU used funding from the USDA State and Private Forestry – Landscape Scale Restoration initiative to implement our "Trout and Trees" project. This project is an effort to restore or improve near-stream (riparian) habitats coupled with in stream habitat work on state and private land throughout five counties in lower Michigan.

During the field season of 2019, TU volunteers lent a big hand with native plantings, habitat surveys, and temperature monitoring in the Little Manistee, Big Manistee, Pine and Pere Marquette River watersheds.

Additionally, TU citizen scientists assisted in monitoring the spread of New Zealand mud snailsacross the state. No new findings were recorded, but TU will continue to

work with partners to monitor existing populations and track the spread.

TU conducted inland lake surveys in cold-water watersheds, in partnership with the State of Michigan's Cooperative Lake Monitoring Program and Huron-Manistee National Forest. TU staff collected periodic data on temperature, clarity, and invasive plant presence and distribution. In another assessment effort, TU partnered with the Michigan DNR to catalog road-stream crossings in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Seventy-five crossings were assessed as a pilot for a refined survey protocol which evaluates the crossing for fish passage and other environmental and structural characteristics. TU will expand the efforts in 2020 so that a priority list of crossings for restoration can be compiled.

TU staff is looking forward to the work lined up in 2020. "Trout and Trees" will continue to engage state and private landowners to increase awareness of coldwater habitat and the forests that surround them. Continued efforts to reconnect habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms in Northern Lower Peninsula Michigan trout streams will extend through the year, with four to six additional road culvert improvements on deck. A watershed-scale temperature assessment on the Big South Branch Pere Marquette will be completed to inform future projects and TU staff are exploring opportunities for habitat improvements on the main branch Pere Marquette with the local chapter. Restoration efforts are expanding into the Upper Peninsula, where TU is partnering with the Ottawa and Hiawatha National forest to plan and implement priority projects to improve cold-water habitat. TU staff continues to work with federal, state and local partners in 2020 to inventory coldwater biological communities, monitor for invasive species and evaluate restoration project effectiveness.

For more information contact Jeremy Geist, Great Lakes Stream Restoration Manager, at jeremy.geist@tu.org.

Northern Wisconsin

TU had another productive year partnering with the US Forest Service on stream reconnection projects in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (CNNF). Through this partnership we reconnected over 40 miles of coldwater habitat in 2019, bringing us to more than 80 miles reconnected since 2016.

Colburn Creek was one project we completed on the CNNF in 2019. This project reconnected over 4 miles of critically important summer and spawning habitat for native brook trout. Replacing this crossing would not have been possible without support from the Wild Rivers Chapter, who obtained funding from a Wisconsin DNR program to get the new crossing over the stream.

TU Chapters and volunteers also helped with work in the Northwoods by assisting the Forest Service with stream habitat improvement projects, contributing funds to support two college interns, and hosting Senator Tammy Baldwin on a paddle down the Bois Brule River. The Wisconsin Council of TU and our Wisconsin chapters deserve a huge thank you for their work to protect trout and coldwater habitat in Wisconsin.

In 2019, we also started a new initiative working with northern Wisconsin tribes and communitiesto adopt fish friendly crossing designs. To launch this new initiative, we hosted a project tour in the spring and a road-stream crossing design workshop in the fall. Interest in both events wasoverwhelming with 50 people attending the tour and more than 80 attending the workshop.

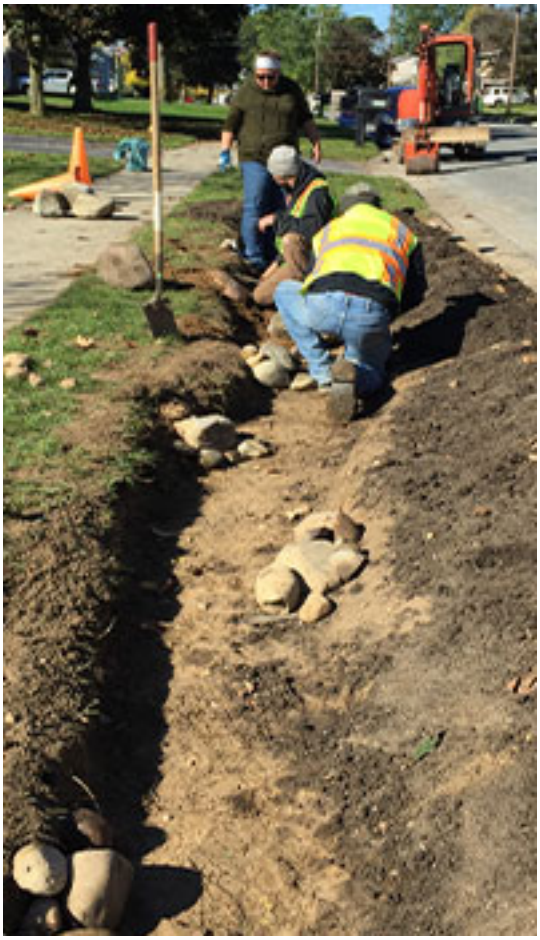
Capturing the momentum from the successful tour and workshop we have partnered with three communities and are helping them explore fish-friendly design alternatives at five crossing locations.

For more information contact Chris Collier, Great Lakes Stream Restoration Manager, atchris.collier@tu.org.

Rogue River Home Rivers Initiative

The Rogue River is a significant trout fishery near Grand Rapids that continues to experience development pressure. To help maintain this important fishery and protect the groundwater it depends on, our projects focus on addressing stormwater issues that come with increasingly developed land. By planting trees and adding vegetation in urban areas, we can help stormwater soak into the ground instead of flow to the river, where it increases temperature, erosion, and other pollutants. In addition to watershed restoration, we continue to engage youth through programs like STREAM Girls and the Green Team.

This year, we launched a tree planting effort supported by the U.S. Forest Service and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to plant trees at six sites along coldwater streams. Trout Unlimited, the Green Team, and local volunteers completed two tree plantings along Blakeslee and Cedar Creek this summer. We will continue this effort in 2020, planting a total of 16,823 trees.



In residential areas, TU's Rainscaping program is helping homeowners create more river-friendly homes by adding native vegetation to help reduce polluted stormwater entering our waterways. Through a project with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Trout Unlimited installed three curb cut rain gardens to protect the headwaters of Barkley Creek, a coldwater tributary to the Rogue River.

Trout Unlimited staff have also continued their wetland restoration efforts in the Rogue River watershed. Through a grant from the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, Trout Unlimited completed its second urban wetland restoration project in Cedar Springs, Michigan along Cedar Creek.

The STREAM Girls program reached more girls this year thanks to great support from local organizations and volunteers. Trout Unlimited staff held four STREAM Girls camps, including a week-long summer camp at Blandford Nature Center. Trout Unlimited is excited to continue this impactful program in 2020 with plans to expand to the Detroit area with new partnerships.

2019 ended on a high note when a class of Grand Valley State University students produced a video highlighting the Green Team, Trout Unlimited's high school work force that does watershed restoration in the summer while getting valuable job training and exposure to environmental justice issues by working with their downstream neighbors in Plaster Creek. Trout Unlimited staff are excited to share this video with the community to get support for the Green Team's important mission.

For more information contact Jamie Vaughan, Rogue River Home Rivers Initiative Project Manager, atjamie.vaughan@tu.org.

Great Lakes Citizen Science

With the recent relocation of TU's Eastern Angler Science Coordinator to Michigan, 2019 marked a year of growth and new opportunities for citizen science in the Great Lakes.

TU hosted an EnviroDIY Workshop in Rockford, Michigan in partnership with the Stroud Water Research Center. The workshops are designed to train volunteer groups to use rapidly emerging technologies in open-source electronics to collect real-time continuous water quality data. Developed by Stroud Water Research Center, the Mayfly Sensor Station is a low-cost, easy-to-use water monitoring station designed to collect continuous data. Data are then uploaded to an online database via cellular signal for real-time access to current stream conditions. Eight stations have been deployed in Michigan so far, in rivers such as the Pere Marquette, Manistee and Rogue.

TU Great Lakes staff supported the development of a new tool for assessing watershed issues and identifying potential projects. The RIVERS (River Inventory for Effective Restoration Strategies) mobile app is a convenient way for TU chapters and staff to collect data on and map disturbances in their home waters. The app was tested in a watershed-scale inventory in the White River Watershed, with volunteers documenting habitat issues such as fish passage barriers, lacking riparian buffers and erosion issues.

A second yearly redd survey was held in the Pere Marquette watershed with support from the PMTU chapter and local guides. During the 2018 PM Redd Survey, key spawning areas were documented in the headwaters of the PM aiding in prioritization of future restoration and protection activities. In 2019, TU volunteers again surveyed the flies-only section and key tributaries to the PM to better understand the distribution of spawning habitat. This effort is made possible by funding from PMTU, the Elliott Donnelley Chapter of TU and other Chicago-area donors.

Working with TU CARES (Central Area Restoration Effort for Sustainability), Wisconsin DNR and the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, a flow monitoring effort was initiated to aid in protection of headwater streams from potential impacts of water withdrawals. Volunteers have deployed continuous water level loggers and are collecting discharge measurements on streams in the Central Sands region of Wisconsin. Streams were prioritized for monitoring based upon a lack of historical data, quality trout populations and resilience to climate change.

In 2020, TU will begin hosting Mayfly Sensor Station workshopsto facilitate the usage of this emerging technology to answer ecological questions, gather long-term baseline datasets and track emerging threats to watersheds in Michigan. With support from the USFS, we will engage volunteers to enhance our capacity to conduct monitoring and assessment to aid in prioritization and effectiveness monitoring of our projects in the Huron Manistee National Forest. The info, which includes water temperature data and environmental DNA analysis, will also aid in the development of computer models to aid in landscape-scale prioritization of coldwater restoration and management.

For more information on Trout Unlimited's citizen science programs, in the Great Lakes region and beyond, reach out to Jake Lemon at jacob.lemon@tu.org.

Great Lakes Advocacy

Trout Unlimited has also seen continued success in the advocacy realm. In 2019, TU advanced the fight against invasive Asian carp and secured increased funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The Brandon Rd. plan to stop Asian carp from reaching the Great Lakes has been submitted to Congress and it is now up to Congress to authorize the project and then begin to appropriate the funds to begin construction.

TU will continue to work with Congress and our partners in conservation to ensure the implementation of the Brandon Rd. plan. The GLRI remains a top priority and TU's grassroots advocacy proved effective once again by aiding in securing $320 million in GLRI appropriations—an increase of $20 million more than each of the previous eight years.

Additionally, TU is excited about the future reauthorization of the GLRI as Great Lakes legislators have introduced a bill to stair-step the program back to its original funding level of $475 million by 2026. This increase would allow TU to continue its GLRI-funded restoration projects across the region and expand to new watersheds that need to be restored and reconnected. Both GLRI and the Brandon Rd. project will likely be included in the 2020 version of the Water Resources Development Act. Volunteers should watch for TU communications about these issues as your voices will be needed for ensuring the passage of these crucial programs.

For more information on Trout Unlimited's advocacy efforts in the Great Lakes region, reach out to Taylor Ridderbusch at taylor.ridderbusch@tu.org.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