



## New York Newsletter 2020

Trout Unlimited had a productive year in New York in 2019. So productive, in fact, that three new staff were added to the Northeast Habitat Program to expand TU's conservation efforts in New York.

[Jo-Anne Humphreys](#) is TU's stream restoration specialist. [Jacob Fetterman](#) is the new Project Coordinator for the Battenkill Home Rivers Initiative, and [Caroline Shafer](#) is the New York Field Technician based in Stamford, N.Y.

[Tracy Brown](#), the restoration manager for New York and Connecticut, leads the New York-based crew.

Director of Veterans Service Partnership, [Mike Banaszewski](#), moved back to New York state, where he will be directing the national [VSP program](#). Mike can answer any questions related to our work with veterans and is looking for ways to engage with local chapters.

[Jen Orr-Greene](#) joined TU in January and will take over Dave Kinney's role as the Mid-Atlantic Policy Director.

In addition to TU National staff, the New York Council Conservation Committee was developed to help expand and support TU Chapter conservation efforts across the state. The committee consists of Evan Renwick (chair, Lake Champlain), John Braico (Adirondack), Reuben Zaramian (New York City), Roy Lamberton (Clearwater) and Daniel Hess (Seth Green). The committee's main goal is to help chapters implement conservation projects on the ground. Contact [Evan Renwick](#) for ways to involve your chapter.

***For all New York Council related questions, Larry Charette is TU's New York Council chair and can be reached at [lawrence.charette@gmail.com](mailto:lawrence.charette@gmail.com).***



# RECONNECTION

One of TU's national priorities is to improve access to critical coldwater habitat for trout and other stream-dwelling creatures.

In New York, TU partners with towns in the Hudson Valley to help them develop practical, affordable approaches to reducing stream habitat fragmentation while simultaneously enhancing flood resilience and protecting and improving infrastructure.



Frog Hollow, Tributary to Willowemoc Creek, after construction reconnecting 3 miles of spawning habitat.

TU and the Town of Chatham received the [Wavemakers Award from the Hudson River Alliance](#) in 2019 for our work developing a road stream crossing management plan for the town and reconnecting 3-miles of [Green Brook](#), a tributary to Kinderhook Creek.

To date road stream crossing management plans have been developed for the towns of Chatham, Hillside, Copake and Ancram. TU is currently working with the towns of Taghkanic, New Baltimore, Ghent and Austerlitz, and we just recently learned that we have been funded to add the Town of Nassau to our list.

Together with our partners [Hudson River Estuary Program](#), NYS DEC Region 4, [Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene County](#) and the [Housatonic Valley Association](#) we have assessed and prioritized more than 1,600 road stream crossings.

In 2019 TU received [funding for our work in the Upper Delaware River](#) that will result in the restoration of 2 miles of high-quality tributary habitat and the reconnection of over 27 miles of stream. Additionally, the TU team with help from Carl Schwartz, [USFWS Partners Program](#), removed a barrier on Frog Hollow, a tributary to the Willowemoc in the Catskills. Additional funding support from NYS DEC Water Quality Improvement Program will result in two more culvert replacement projects in the Town of Delhi and Chatham.



## RESTORATION

TU staff and volunteers continue to plant along priority streams across the state.

Since 2017, TU has partnered with the [Arbor Day Foundation](#) to plant nearly 15,000 native trees along priority trout streams in New York. Several chapters throughout the state continue to improve their favorite trout stream through riparian plantings.



The Canandaigua Chapter has been planting trees on the Cohocton River since 2013 (Photo). Adirondack, Ashokan-Pepacton, Columbia-Greene, Long Island, New York City, Croton, Catskill Mountain, Dave Brandt and [Lake Champlain](#) chapters participated in the TU and Arbor Day Project planting activities. [The benefits of a mature streamside buffer](#) cannot be overstated; roots help stabilize banks, provide organic material and keep trout stream cool.

TU has received additional support from the Arbor Day Foundation to continue our planting efforts. Many more planting days are planned for 2020. Chapters that would like to get involved, or that are seeking trees for riparian projects, are invited to reach out to Tracy Brown for more information.

### **Battenkill Home Rivers Initiative**

The past year has seen a great deal of progress leading to the launch [of the Battenkill Home Rivers Initiative](#). [On-the-ground assessments began](#) in the summer of 2019, in concert with behind-the-scenes work to obtain adequate support and funding.



A [stream function-based framework](#) was utilized to prioritize projects aiming to protect, restore, and reconnect coldwater habitat throughout the watershed.

Jacob Fetterman, Battenkill Home Rivers Initiative coordinator, said the initiative's goal is to enhance the ecosystem's resiliency and the existing wild trout fishery by increasing available habitat, floodplain connectivity, riparian cover, and overall stability while decreasing sedimentation, excess nutrients, and thermal input. This project is spearheaded by local Adirondack, Clearwater and Southwestern Vermont TU chapters.

"We are excited to begin this journey and look forward to working with you or seeing you out on the water," Fetterman said.



## CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

The Ashokan-Pepacton Watershed Chapter is conducting a [Catskill heritage brook trout study](#) in partnership with the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program.



The Columbia-Greene Chapter, in partnership with Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District

and DEC Region 4, completed a stream restoration and habitat improvement project on Hunter Brook, an important brook trout stream in Ulster County.

“The purpose of the Hunter Brook project was to create pools in an overwide stream with very little deep water,” explained Steve Swenson, Aquatic Ecologist for NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. “Improving habitat will provide the stream’s brook trout with the opportunity to grow into older age classes.”

In Monroe County, the Seth Green Chapter, in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, [completed a large wood habitat enhancement project on Oatka Creek](#).

“Oatka Creek is a much-loved stream that has been hit hard by extreme conditions for a few years in a row,” said Jessie Hollenbeck, the president of the Seth Green TU Chapter. “This project has invigorated the chapter and is helping build a strong collaboration between anglers and the community.”

The great habitat work TU chapters are accomplishing will continue thanks to the continued Habitat Partners Funding Program launched by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Through the program DEC will supply up to \$5,000 in materials needed for in-channel and riparian habitat improvement work on priority cold water streams. This year’s funding will support up to 10 shovel-ready TU Chapter projects located on publicly accessible state owned or Public Fishing Right easements. Proposals are due March 15. If you are interested in learning more about the Habitat Partner Funding Program or need help identifying conservation opportunities for your chapter, please contact [John Braico](#).

*For more information on Trout Unlimited's restoration efforts in New York, please reach out to Tracy Brown at [Tracy.Brown@tu.org](mailto:Tracy.Brown@tu.org).*



## UPCOMING 2020 EVENTS

### **Catskills**

Subscribe to the [TU Catskill listserv](#) to learn about ways to get involved in the Upper Delaware River projects and hear about upcoming events throughout the Catskills.



- April 21 – 22 -  
Livingston Manor, N.Y.
- [Digital Mayfly Data  
Logger Sensor Stations  
Workshop](#)

Jake Lemon, TU's Eastern Angler Science Coordinator, will lead a workshop on the uses of the Mayfly Sensor Stations and how chapters can expand the availability of quality real-time water data in their home waters. For more information and to RSVP contact [Caroline Shafer](#).

- April 25 - Delhi, N.Y. planting event in partnership with Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District and the [Catskill Streams Buffer Initiative](#). For more information and to RSVP contact [Catherine Skalda](#).

- May 16 - Port Jervis, N.Y. [RIVERS](#) training and stream assessment on Neversink River and tributaries. Come for the fishing and enjoy learning about ways you can help our conservation team. For more information and to RSVP contact [Caroline Shafer](#).

- June 6 - Livingston Manor, N.Y. [RIVERS](#) training and stream assessment event on the Willowemoc and Beaverkill River. Come for the fishing and enjoy learning about ways you can help our conservation team. For more information and to RSVP contact [Caroline Shafer](#).

### **Adirondacks**

- March 21 and 22 - [Adirondack Sports Summer Expo](#), Saratoga Springs City Center. TU table event with activities and information on our work.

### **Battenkill**

- April 25 - Greenwich, N.Y. Riparian restoration volunteer planting event on the Battenkill. For more information and to RSVP contact [Jacob Fetterman](#).

- May 30 - Greenwich, N.Y. [10th Annual River Runs Through It Festival](#). Come join local TU chapters for fun on the river. For more information and to RSVP contact [Jacob Fetterman](#).

### **Croton**

- May 2 – Amawalk, N.Y. The New York City and Croton Chapters will be leading a riparian restoration volunteer planting event on the Amawalk River. For more information and to RSVP contact [David Kearford](#).



## **COMMUNITY**

After wrapping up a successful school year in the early summer of 2019, New York's Trout in the Classroom program has relaunched in classrooms across the state, bringing in a record number of teachers and students. Trout in the Classroom is a unique, hands-on, STEM-focused, environmental education and conservation program for students of all ages.

More than 250 schools throughout New York state, including over 100 in and around New York City, participate in the program. This amazing experience brings stewardship learning and an appreciation for healthy streams right into the classroom by engaging students, teachers and the school community.

TU Chapter and volunteer support is imperative to the success of this program that helps with trout tank set-up, teacher



Photo: NYC DEP

professional learning opportunities, and bus trips to the watershed streams during the spring trout releases.

*To donate to a classroom, volunteer during the trout release season, or get more information about Trout in the Classroom visit [www.troutintheclassroom.org](http://www.troutintheclassroom.org) or email Lillit Genovesi at [lillit.genovesi@tu.org](mailto:lillit.genovesi@tu.org).*

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## ADVOCACY

The [Delaware River Basin Restoration Program](#) received a bump in appropriations to \$9.7 million in the FY20 budget. That's an increase from last year's \$6.5 million and \$5 million the year before.

This appropriation supports a matching grant program, which is now funding \$3 million worth of TU projects with our partners in [New York](#), [New Jersey](#), and [Pennsylvania](#).



TU has received nearly [\\$1.5 million in funding](#) from the program to date—\$1 million of that in conjunction with [Friends of the Upper Delaware River \(FUDR\)](#), a close partner in much of our work to conserve and restore the system's wild trout fisheries. The awards fund on-the-ground stream projects that preserve water quality, restore aquatic habitat and protect the wild trout fishery, enhance river-based recreational opportunities, and mitigate the damaging impacts of flooding.

In 2019, TU volunteers sent more than 550 emails to Congressional offices in support of the Delaware River Basin conservation funding, amplifying the message that staff delivered in D.C. this spring during a round of meetings with coalition partners. Thanks to your help, this three-year-old conservation program is gathering momentum.

**New York State Advocacy**



TU is getting behind a watershed restoration initiative announced during Gov. Andrew Cuomo's State of the State speech. Under the "[Restoring Mother Nature](#)" initiative, New York would borrow \$3 billion to fund projects that improve critical fish and wildlife habitat while also reducing flood risks. If state lawmakers approve the bonding, it would go to voters in November.

Complementing the Cuomo proposal is [legislation to upgrade protections for thousands of miles of New York streams](#), including an estimated 900 wild trout waters. The bill would ensure that these waters are included in the Department of Environmental Conservation's Protection of Waters Program, so that development activities can be properly reviewed, permitted, and implemented. Stay tuned for updates about how you can help move this bill across the finish line.

### **New York trout Regulations**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is developing a new inland trout stream management plan. The complete draft plan will be made available on this [DEC webpage](#). Once the draft is released, we will have 45 days to provide written comments.

### **Upper Delaware Reservoir Releases**

In 2019, the Delaware River Basin Commission's Subcommittee on Ecological Flows crafted a new water release policy to address thermal spikes on the Upper Delaware.

TU volunteers Garth Pettinger, Bob Bachman and Lee Hartman dedicated

hours of their time to work on the plan, alongside FUDR director Jeff Skelding.



The partners pushed back against an initial plan to allow temperatures to reach 77 degrees on the river, a level that would cause significant stress to the wild trout fishery.

Under the agreement, predictions that water temperatures will hit 75 degrees at Lordville will trigger cold water releases from Cannonsville Reservoir. The parties agreed to reevaluate this policy in

2020. A thermal mitigation water bank was set aside under the 2017 Flexible Flow Management Program, but it is not enough to keep the Upper Delaware flows at optimal temperatures during hot summer months.

***For more information on Trout Unlimited's advocacy efforts in New York, please reach out to Jen Orr-Greene at [Jen.Orrgreene@tu.org](mailto:Jen.Orrgreene@tu.org).***