



TU CHAPTER & COUNCIL MANUAL

Resources and guidance to help you grow and engage a diverse community of passionate members and supporters to care for our coldwater resources





TU Chapter & Council Manual

July 2023

TU Mission: To bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams so that our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon.

TU Vision: For communities across America to engage in the work of repairing and renewing our rivers, streams, and other water bodies on which we all depend.

Trout Unlimited, through our network of more than 420 nationwide local chapters and state councils, has been working for 60 years to bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams so that our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon. TU's 300,000 grassroots members and supporters bring our mission to life, creating thriving communities of anglers and conservationists across the country.

You are likely reading this manual because you have taken on the exciting and rewarding responsibility of playing an active role in a Trout Unlimited (TU) council or chapter community. As a volunteer leader, you join a long tradition of forward-thinking conservationists and anglers who have led the work of repairing and renewing our rivers, streams, and other water bodies on which we all depend. Volunteer leaders like you have been at the forefront of caring for trout and salmon waters throughout America, from local streams like Red Brook in Massachusetts to world-famous rivers like the Big Blackfoot in Montana to iconic watersheds like Bristol Bay in Alaska.

Leadership in TU should be an enriching and joyful experience, but it won't always be easy. The TU model empowers volunteer leaders to take on a vast suite of responsibilities which, depending on your position, could involve arranging projects, organizing trips, recruiting new members, coordinating youth education programs, fundraising, or acting as a spokesperson to media, officials, and the public.

The objective of this manual is to provide a one-stop-shop for guidelines and resources to help you run your TU chapter or council and participate in regional or national level activities. It is a powerful tool to help on-board new volunteers to your chapter or council, and a great reference to have handy when exploring new opportunities or during board and committee conversations.

While this resource is comprehensive and based on decades of experience training and supporting our grassroots volunteers, nothing beats in-person learning and human connections as you learn and grow in your volunteer role.

If you have additional questions or require assistance, never hesitate to reach out to [your volunteer operations staff](#) and be sure to keep abreast of new TU resources live online and in-person trainings and more in the online Tacklebox at www.tu.org/tacklebox.

Thank You for Serving as a TU Volunteer Leader

Trout Unlimited's model of grassroots-led volunteer chapters and councils is one of our organization's greatest strengths.

As a national organization, we harness your knowledge, time, skills and individual passion for cold, clean rivers and streams – close to home and across the country – and support you with the best available science, professional staff expertise and the technology and tools we have developed.

It's a force multiplier that means we can get so much more done on the ground than many of our peer conservation nonprofits.

Building a community around conservation doesn't happen by accident – it takes hard work, dedicated effort, and a burning passion for making your home waters better, colder and cleaner than you found them and leaving that legacy for the next generation to follow.

Thanks to all of you, our mission is carried to nearly every corner of the country through a network of more than 420 local chapters, state councils and college clubs in 46 states.



Beverly Smith, Vice President for Volunteer Operations

Each year, this veritable army of grassroots volunteers makes an impressive impact with:

- More than 700,000 volunteer hours committed to our mission
- Over 1,000 conservation projects restoring streams
- At least 1,600 youth education programs inspiring the next generation
- An astounding 1,750 community outreach events, connecting anglers and conservationists
- More than 3,000 local chapter gatherings, building a strong and vibrant community

You also raise and spend more than \$10 million on important local conservation and education efforts!

The combined value of that in real terms is just shy of \$30 million, but the impact is incalculable.

While these numbers alone are impressive, the rapid advances we are seeing in areas such as diversity, equity and inclusion, community engagement and sound board governance speak to the overall health and strength of our local chapters and councils. The business of running a TU chapter or council is no small task, yet year-after-year you rise to the occasion and invest all you have in helping our organization thrive.

Thanks for all you have done for TU, and all you are committing to by stepping up as a volunteer leader.

We can't wait to see all you will achieve!

Beverly Smith

Beverly Smith
Vice President for Volunteer Operations



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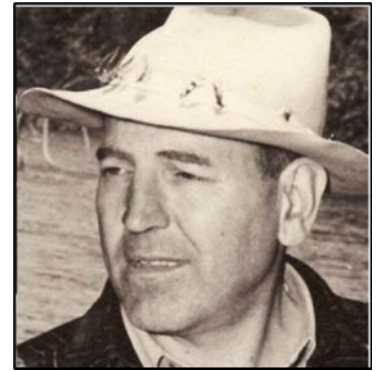
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Chapter 1: A Short TU History

Founded over 60 years ago on the banks of the Au Sable River near Grayling, Mich., the 16 anglers who gathered at the home of George Griffith (*pictured, right*) were united by their love of trout fishing, and by their growing disgust with the state's practice of stocking its waters with "cookie cutter trout"—catchable-sized hatchery fish. Convinced that Michigan's trout streams could turn out a far superior fish if left to their own devices, the anglers formed a new organization: Trout, Unlimited (the comma was dropped a few years later.)



From the beginning, TU was guided by the principle that if we "take care of the fish, then the fishing will take care of itself." And that principle was grounded in science. "One of our most important objectives is to develop programs and recommendations based on the very best information and thinking available," said TU's first president, Dr. Casey E. Westell Jr., "In all matters of trout management, we want to know that we are substantially correct, both morally and biologically."

In 1962-63, TU prepared its first policy statement on wild trout, and persuaded the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to discard "put-and-take" trout stocking and start managing for wild trout and healthy habitat. On the heels of that success, anglers quickly founded TU chapters in Illinois, Wisconsin, New York and Pennsylvania.

TU won its first national campaign in 1965: stopping the construction of the Reichle dam on Montana's Big Hole River. Five years later, TU helped secure a ban on high-seas fishing for Atlantic salmon. Through TU's early history, the organization had a handful of large-scale projects or campaigns; however, most of TU's work involved local, instream projects largely implemented by volunteer-run chapters.

In 1979 TU's headquarters moved to Washington, D.C., where it remains today. Still, before the early 1990s, the national organization involved few staff, with operations not involving much beyond the distribution of *TROUT* magazine. In 1992, TU had a 2 million-dollar operating budget and 55,000 members.

Today, TU is closing in on becoming a \$100 million-dollar organization with approximately 240 staff and 300,000 members and supporters organized into about 400 local chapters.

There is great demand for the work TU does making our nation's watersheds and the communities connected to them more resilient. As a result, our 60-year-old organization has seen tremendous growth in a short period of time.

Chapter 2: TU's Organizational Structure

One of TU's greatest assets is our organizational model of more than 385 locally-run chapters, 37 state councils, our [National Leadership Council](#), the [Board](#), and a growing [staff of more than 230](#) talented professionals in a range of fields. When it works – when we're all at our best and pulling on the same rope, in the same direction – we have a fighting chance of achieving our [organizational vision](#) for communities across America to engage in the work of repairing and renewing the rivers, streams, and other waters on which we all depend.

Membership

Many hands make light work, and no other grassroots conservation organization is as good as TU at building a diverse and inclusive community of volunteers to make our streams healthier and cleaner.

To do this, we call on our active members and supporters, who number more than 300,000, and engage with TU and the work that we do. This includes those that are signed up for our weekly e-newsletter, members in a family membership, lapsed members, social media followers and more.

Full details on the various types of memberships and ways to grow and engage your local chapter membership can be found in the [Membership section of the Tacklebox](#).

Per [TU's bylaws](#), all members are placed into a chapter based on their ZIP code and become a member of that local chapter. Members can also choose to belong to a different chapter. All members have the right to vote in the election of the TU national board of trustees at our annual meeting.

Local Chapters

The heart of TU are the hundreds of local chapter communities across the country which engage and connect a diverse community of members and supporters to care for and recover the coldwater streams they love.

There is no grassroots force more powerful than people who share a passion and a purpose working together to carry out our shared mission. There is no "typical" chapter when it comes to size, activity level and focus, as chapters range in size from a single watershed to an entire state and in membership size from less than 100 to over 4,000. Each TU chapter is unique, but all share the goals of our strategic plan.

TU is a publicly supported 501(c)3 nonprofit and each local chapter (and state council) operates under our national group exemption form the IRS but have their own employer identification number (EIN). TU chapters are financially independent of the national organization, but must submit an [annual activity report](#) outlining the transactions, volunteer activities and other information to TU national each year.

A TU chapter must have a full board of directors and maintain a level of activity required by their state council to remain in good standing. Establishing a new chapter takes place through an application process that involves working closely with the state council to determine chapter boundaries, bylaws provisions, and other administrative details. More details on how to form a chapter of TU, please reach out to [your volunteer operations staff](#).





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State Councils

Chapters in a region are organized into a council. Most are organized by state boundaries; however, some councils are made up of more than one state (for example the Mid-Atlantic Council which serves Maryland and Washington D.C.) Some chapters operate outside of the council structure due to the lack of nearby chapters (for example 607 - Sagebrush Chapter in Nevada.) In most cases, the council serves as an umbrella organization for its chapters, state-wide.

The council officers are made up of volunteers from around the state who may have previously or are currently serving as officers or directors of a local chapter. Council officers are elected by chapter representatives. Councils are the key link between the TU staff and local chapters and play a critical role advocating for trout and salmon at the state level.

The successful operation of a TU council is very much dependent on the degree and depth of commitment of the chapters and the council leadership. The council is not simply another chapter and should be regarded as a coalition, the vital thread that binds all the chapters together for mutual support and assistance. The council, therefore, deserves the active participation of every chapter in its state.

Like a TU chapter, councils are required to have their own employer identification number (EIN) and file their own tax forms with the IRS.

The National Leadership Council (NLC)

The role of [the National Leadership Council \(NLC\)](#) and its rules for functioning are detailed in Article IV. of the [TU by-laws](#). The NLC is the volunteer body that helps to set the direction of TU and is made up of one representative elected from each of the 36 state councils, a chair and secretary.

The NLC has three purposes:

1. Develop and amend [the National Conservation Agenda \(NCA\)](#) and set priorities among issues in that agenda.
2. Direct the implementation of [the NCA](#) in projects that involve all levels of the organization.
3. Improve the capacity of TU to fulfill its mission at all levels through:
 - Communication with training and advice to volunteer leaders,
 - Improving the capacity of state councils and local chapters to fulfill the mission,
 - Integrating efforts of volunteers and staff i.e. “One TU” and recruiting volunteer leaders.

The NLC accomplishes these three tasks by being a conduit between councils and TU national. NLC Representatives bring issues and concerns from their states to the national level and then bring decisions and initiatives from the national level back to their councils. The NLC meets annually in person at the Annual Meeting and via teleconferences throughout the year. There is a stipend provided to each council to help cover the costs of NLC Representatives attending the Annual Meeting. NLC Representatives also serve on workgroups that focus on specific conservation or organizational issues that span more than two states. NLC workgroups are established to address regional or organization-wide issues. These workgroups are composed mainly, but not exclusively, of NLC members and are supported by one or more staff members. There are two main categories of workgroups: conservation and organizational. The current NLC workgroups are:

Conservation Workgroups

Great Lakes
Native Trout
Tailwaters
Delaware River
TU DARE (Driftless Area Restoration Effort)
Responsible Mining & Energy Development
Land Conservancy
Access
Climate Change

Organizational Workgroups

Diversity and Inclusion
New Initiatives
Grassroots
Communications
Youth Education

The composition and tasks of workgroups will change with time. To find out more about current NLC workgroups ask your council's NLC Representative.

Board of Trustees

TU's Board of Trustees (BOT) guides the organization. The BOT, consisting of 32 individuals, meets in person three times a year to review and approve financial and organizational decisions. The nominating committee of the BOT nominates individuals to be the twenty-two “at-large” members of the BOT. The chair and secretary of the NLC fill two of the BOT positions. The remaining eight positions on the BOT are filled by “grassroots trustees” nominated by the NLC. Generally, BOT members can serve up to three consecutive two-year terms, but corporate officers and the chairs of standing BOT committees may serve for more than six consecutive years.

TU's governance structure and the relationships between the different levels are spelled out in the [TU bylaws](#).

Staff

TU currently has over 240 staff, approximately 25 of whom are in the home office in Arlington, Va, just outside of Washington, D.C. The remaining staff is spread out in field offices around the country.

TU staff operate out of the following departments:

- Development
- Eastern Conservation
- Finance & Administration
- Government Affairs
- Human Resources & Information Technology
- Marketing & Communications
- Science
- Volunteer Operations
- Western Conservation

Each department has a relevant vice president who serves on the senior staff, helping the TU President and CEO, the COO, the CFO, and legal counsel with organization-wide management and leadership.



Chris Wood, TU President & CEO

Many departments have sub-departments. For example, Western Conservation has four sub-departments, each with its own director: the Angler Conservation Project; Western Water and Habitat Program; California and Alaska.

Additionally, six TU councils and two TU chapters employ staff at the local or state level, and many more regularly hire contractors to help support their volunteer effort.

A listing of TU staff, including contact forms, is found in [the online staff directory](#).

[As a volunteer leader, your primary contact on staff are the members of the Volunteer Operations department, who can advise and support the majority of your work and help connect you to the appropriate](#)

Chapter 3: TU's Strategic Plan

The [TU strategic plan](#), updated in 2021, seeks to set a new direction for our organization, one that starts with the recognition that healthy fish and communities rely on healthy water, but that 1.5 million miles of trout and salmon waters in America are degraded. These declining lands and waters are home not only to iconic native and wild fish, but also the very same rivers and streams that supply the water we drink, irrigation for our lands, and endless opportunities to get outside and connect with nature.

Climate change poses real and immediate threats. Warming waters, drought, wildfires, and extreme flooding degrade important streams and rivers. These are systemic threats requiring equally comprehensive and integrated responses. If we are to deliver solutions that match the complexity of the challenges we face, TU and our partners must scale up our work.

Over the next five years, we will create common ground among diverse interests, overcome obstacles with grassroots credibility, professional skill, nonpartisan advocacy, and scientific expertise, build meaningful relationships with decision makers, land and resource stewards, community members, and other stakeholders to deliver meaningful change across landscapes.

OUR VISION OF SUCCESS

Our vision is for communities across America to engage in the work of repairing and renewing our rivers, streams, and other water bodies on which we all depend.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams so that our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon.

OUR BELIEFS

We believe in...

The wisdom of nature. Conservation is an ethical obligation.

Community and the power of people. We can solve our problems if we work together.

Hard work. Problems can only be solved if we are willing to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

OUR VALUES

Resourceful: We see opportunity in challenges. Rather than simply treating symptoms, we find solutions.

Science-based: We are innovative and base our efforts on sound science to drive conservation action.

Collaborative: We operate through non-partisan collaboration and partnership. We work across differences.

Inclusive: We listen to, value, and respect all communities to welcome diverse voices and perspectives.

United: We mobilize behind common ground and a shared vision.

Hopeful: We are optimists and believe in a better future.

OUR GOALS

To harness the collective power of TU more fully over the next five years, we commit to the following three organizational goals:

Goal 1: Identify a national network of shared priority waters for native and wild trout and salmon, and a plan for fixing them.

Goal 2: Create and expand a diverse corps of staff, volunteers, and partners to advocate for and participate in the care and recovery of our lands and waters.

Goal 3: Invest in people – staff, volunteers, and partners – so we have the tools, technology, training, and resources necessary to achieve our shared goals.

TU's strategic plan offers new pathways for collective action and results across the country through educating, engaging, and inspiring people and communities to care for the lands and waters that sustain us all.



Council and Chapter Strategic Plans:

Aligned with TU's national strategic plan, each state council and local chapter is encouraged to develop their own plan which takes the mission, vision, values and key goals of TU and applies them to their local home waters and communities.

Recognizing the unique resources available locally, these plans can be powerful drivers of meaningful impact. Chapter and council strategic plans do not need to be multi-page documents with complex structure and detailed tasks, they can be simple, one-page plans identifying key goals and opportunities.

Common attributes of effective chapters and councils include:

- A strategic conservation plan to care for and recover home waters and support shared priority waters initiatives;
- A strategic approach to communications that clearly and compellingly expresses TU's mission and vision;
- A strategic approach to community engagement, membership development and board recruitment;
- A strategic approach to fundraising, adapting new technologies to diversify revenue streams;
- A passionate, engaged board of directors who articulately advocate for the organization; and
- Clearly defined and consistently practiced board roles and responsibilities that have clear expectations and accountability for board members.

This manual will detail a number of strategies to help you on each of the above points; however, the key to each of them is the strategic approach – being intentional and planning around each point.

TU has [many resources](#) designed to help your chapter or council start the strategic planning process including planning templates, a sample chapter strategic plan, and online tutorial trainings.

The process of preparing the plan is almost more important than the plan itself. Although you should refer to the plan often over the course of a year, the communal thinking required to draft the plan will increase feelings of ownership, deepen the commitment of your chapter or council members, and provide a shared sense of direction and purpose.

When developing your plan, it is important to consider the TU mission, the needs in your community, and the resources available. When assessing resources available, don't forget to look to other TU entities. TU's science team, for example, may have new data to bring to bear for helping to prioritize your work. Another important resource to consider is the state council. Council's play a key coordinating role for TU. If TU's many moving parts are strategically aligned across watersheds and communities, we're far more likely to be successful in implementing our shared strategies.

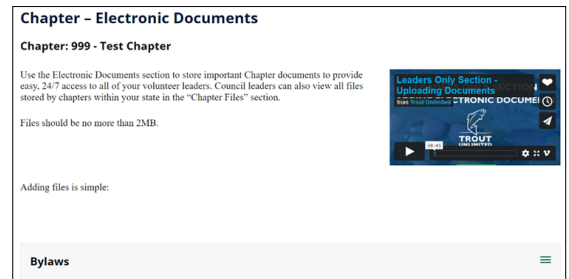
The result of your work does not need to be a 50-page document. A simple plan, two to four pages long, can often be the best as a working foundation for your board and volunteers.



Chapter 4: Chapter Basics and Resources

Bylaws

There are nearly 400 chapters of TU in the United States. Local TU chapter leaders are constantly generating innovative ideas, successful solutions, and expanding the size and effectiveness of our grassroots base. One thing that binds each chapter is a common set of bylaws that contain some basic requirements to align chapters with [the national bylaws](#). It is required that all current chapter bylaws are posted and stored in the Leaders Only Tools section of tu.org. Visit the site to download and review your chapter (and your council's) bylaws.



The Tacklebox

To help chapters achieve their goals, improve their effectiveness, and share resources between one another, [TU volunteer operations staff](#) maintains an online library for volunteer leaders that we call [the Tacklebox](#). This always evolving resource is always found at the friendly link tu.org/tacklebox and is organized into a few key areas:

[Chapter Leader Resources](#): Designed for the officers, directors and committee leaders of local chapters, these resources cover requirements of managing a nonprofit and a TU chapter, strategic planning, leadership recruitment and development and more.

[Council Leader Resources](#): Designed for the officers, directors and committee leaders of our 36 state councils, these resources include council officer position descriptions, National Leadership Council information, council committee resources, council leadership development resources and more.

[Conservation & Science Resources](#): These resources are designed to help volunteers implement conservation projects, engage in hands-on science and monitoring work, and more.

[Diversity and Inclusion, Youth and TU Service Partnership Resources](#): Efforts to engage and educate the next generation of conservationists, to broaden the diversity of our members and leaders and to serve and connect with the first responder and military communities are critical to building strong and healthy chapters and councils.

[Risk Management & Financial Controls Resources](#): Safeguarding TU assets, protecting your chapter or council against liability, and ensuring our credibility remains strong, relies on a focused effort to make sure all the policies, procedures and requirements are being followed. These essential steps not only help prevent future issues, but they also strengthen your practices and increase your abilities as a volunteer-led organization.

[Membership Recruitment & Engagement Resources](#): With more than 300,000 members and supporters, TU's greatest strength is the army of angler advocates and volunteers we can muster to lead, support and promote our organization and its mission. At the chapter and council level, recruiting new members and getting existing members more active are among the best ways to grow your volunteer and resource pool and increase your local work.

[Communications Resources](#): Effective communications are essential to success in all of our chapter, council and national activities. Currently, reaching members, potential members and supporters requires a healthy mix of print, digital and social media communications and use of messages and images proven to grow the TU brand and awareness and participation in our work.

[Fundraising Resources](#): From banquets and traditional fundraising, to our vendor partner discount program, and new fundraisers such as film tours and brewery events, there are plenty of tried-and-true tactics to raise money to support your mission. Review resources, guides, and see the lessons learned from fellow volunteers.

[Trainings, Regional & Annual Events](#): Learn about powerful weekend retreats where you can meet and network with fellow volunteers, attend live online webinar trainings with TU staff and outside experts, and view recordings of past sessions and helpful tips for using and navigating the Leaders Only Tools section of tu.org.

Each area in the Tacklebox has a list of downloadable documents and links. Because it is an online resource, it is constantly updated and improved with new chapter programs, examples, tools, links and ideas added regularly.

Be sure that all new leaders in your chapter or council are aware of this valuable resource.

Chapter Conservation, Science and Advocacy

TU was founded in 1959 by local people who saw their home waters being impacted by a range of man-made and environmental factors, and who wanted to take action to halt and reverse that damage.

They worked together to protect the rivers and watersheds from further damage; to reconnect them by removing dams, culverts and other barriers; to restore them by planting trees and building habitat; and to sustain that effort into the future by building a conservation community that would leave a lasting legacy for cold, clean rivers and streams.

Because we believe that conservation is an ethical obligation, mobilizing our members and supporters to roll up their sleeves for the hard work is a stronger driving force than it ever was, with nearly 400 local TU chapters across the country working to take care of the places they love, the rivers they fish, and the native and wild trout and salmon living there.



Not only is [our landscape-model approach to conservation](#) a powerful way to ensure clean water and healthy streams, it has also proven to be one of the most effective ways to build local TU chapter communities with active members, committed volunteers, strong leaders, and a deep impact. In fact, among our chapters and councils across the country, the ones most actively engaged in conservation and science projects are finding their efforts to give people a chance to “get their hands dirty” on projects are growing their ability to recruit more members, grow their base of volunteer leaders, and take on more together.

Trash cleanups can be simple – and fun – to organize: Simply find a stretch of a local stream that has an abundance of trash along its banks (urban and suburban streams – even if they don’t have coldwater for trout are ideal for this) and work with the landowners to coordinate a date and time when you can muster volunteers to walk the stream and pick up trash while building relationships.

Tree plantings can be more involved, requiring not only a willing landowner, but also an understanding of the native trees and shrubs that will flourish along your local stream. This is the perfect time to partner with a local watershed association or garden club to tap into their knowledge of plant species and their list of potential volunteers.

When planning a volunteer workday – whether planting trees or picking up trash – keep these tips in mind:

- Set a date well in advance and communicate it broadly;
- Use the [TU Event Tool](#) to promote the event, collect registrations and share the event on the [TU National Calendar](#) for a wider audience to find;
- Reach out directly to non-TU volunteers by connecting with partners like watershed associations, land trusts, garden clubs, Boy and Girl Scout troops, civic organizations like Kiwanis or Rotary and more;
- Get the local press involved – both with pre-event press releases to seek volunteers and with coverage of the cleanup or planting itself;
- Have at least one volunteer designated as the official “greeter” to check volunteers in, welcome and thank them for coming, get them to join your e-mail list, buy a membership or sign your volunteer waiver;
- Take lots of photographs of volunteers from the local community taking care of a local stream to use to promote your work on your website, emails, social media – and to promote future conservation events.

[The Embrace A Stream grant program](#) supports the conservation projects of TU chapters and councils with grants up to \$10,000 per year for on-the-ground restoration, protection, or conservation efforts that benefit trout and salmon fisheries and their habitats.

Since its inception in 1975, EAS has funded more than 1,120 individual projects with more than \$4.85 million in direct cash grants.

The program also supports education or outreach projects that increase the awareness and support of coldwater conservation among a non-TU audience; applied research, assessment, or monitoring that addresses the causes of fisheries or watershed problems and helps develop management solutions; and more. For details, visit tu.org/eas.

TU chapters have a long history of collaborating with land trusts to conserve coldwater fisheries. Because TU is not a land trust and does not have the specific mission of protecting and holding land, TU works with partners in the land trust world to carry out this highly technical work.

Your TU chapter can bring a variety of tools and support to land trusts to help conserve coldwater streams and watersheds. For more information, read [TU's Guide to Working with Land Trusts](#).

The [Land Conservancy Workgroup](#) of the National Leadership Council has also established the [Land Conservancy Fund](#), a matching grant program designed to help local chapters and councils support land trusts in the purchase of open space which will directly benefit native and wild trout streams.

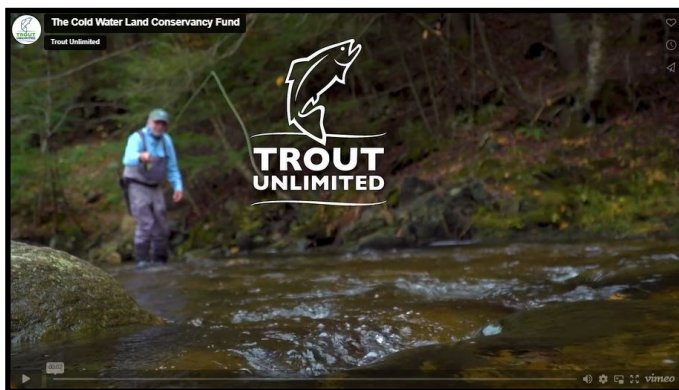
The fund will typically award grants of up to \$5,000, though larger grant requests will be considered and a one-to-one match is required. One of the most valuable uses of the fund is to help defray the upfront costs often associated with a potential open space purchase, such as the surveying or appraisal work needed to map and value the parcel.

[Community science](#) is a rapidly expanding field where millions of participants each year gather data on hundreds of topics ranging from the weather to water quality, threatened and endangered species, and such far off topics as the shape of galaxies. Trout Unlimited members have been gathering data on water quality and fish populations for decades, but recently we have significantly expanded the opportunities for anglers to assist in the science-based management of trout and salmon and their habitats. TU chapters are playing a pivotal role engaging with community science efforts.

One of the latest tools in our community science program include [RIVERS, a smartphone app](#) on the Survey 123 platform that allows volunteers to photo-document impaired river habitat using a mapping application. The value of this program lies in the ability to get lots of volunteers into the field to walk miles of river that do not receive regular, formal assessments by fisheries professionals. The maps and images collected can be used to plan and prioritize restoration projects.

Other tools available include the [Water Quality Monitoring handbook](#), [stream temperature monitoring](#), [eDNA collection](#), [spawning REDD survey tools](#) and more.

Though often a state council activity, many chapters are increasingly getting involved in [advocacy](#), working to influence policy, at the local municipal or county level. Councils are involved in advocacy at the state level. More information about being an effective advocate for coldwater resources can be found in the publication, [Speaking for Trout and Salmon](#). Advocacy campaigns are most effective when they involve a large number of people. For this reason, it usually makes sense to work with other chapters, your council or TU national staff when engaging in advocacy. Remember that due to TU's status as a 501(c)(3) organization, chapters or councils may not endorse or oppose any candidate for public office; must strictly account for the portion of their activities devoted to lobbying; and cannot donate money to a non-501(c)3 organization or a 501(c)3 organization that does not further TU's mission.



The Land Conservancy Fund video describes the program and its benefits from the perspective of TU volunteers, landowners and land trust partners.



Chapter Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

What do diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) mean to TU?

Diversity: The range of identities, characteristics, experiences, and perceptions including, but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, geography, age, religion, political affiliation, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, language, and physical appearance. We acknowledge that individuals and groups affiliate with multiple identities. We believe that building space for these differences creates a pathway to strengthen our organization.

Equity: Is the experience of just treatment, access to opportunity, and support for growth. Equity necessitates:

- Trust in and acceptance of all people as core to organizational health independent of the extent of our understanding of their specific roles.
- Identifying and eliminating barriers and rectifying injustices that prevent full participation.
- Increasing justice within the procedures and processes of our organization.

Inclusion: Is the practice of building and maintaining equitable, welcoming environments in which all feel respected, supported, valued, heard and seen. An inclusive climate consciously creates space to not only invite, but also seek out and engage with all people, and offers respect in words and actions.

Why is this work important for TU?

For 60 years, Trout Unlimited has worked in, and thus perpetuated, a system that has prohibited the full participation of all people. Unjust systems of exclusion and power unfairly lay harm on those who are not of the dominant culture, and without the unmitigated involvement of whole communities, our mission work is incomplete. The threats to trout and salmon are worse today than ever before despite significant organizational investment. Only by deconstructing the system that has excluded the participation of communities and people whose involvement and well-being is vital to the health of coldwater watersheds will we have a fighting chance of achieving our organizational vision of ensuring that robust populations of trout and salmon once again thrive in their native range.

The Diversity and Inclusion workgroup of the National Leadership Council has been working for over a decade to foster inclusion and belonging across chapters and councils. Increased diversity represented in your chapter's membership and leadership will translate into a strength in ideas, strength in community, strength in conservation. Here are some ideas to get your chapter started or to ramp up your diversity and inclusion efforts.

Be Strategic:

- In the model of [the TU national strategic plan](#), consider adding diversity, equity and inclusion into your chapter or council plan. Take time to evaluate the needs of all constituents in your community.
- Build collaborative relationships with community partners to understand existing community needs.
- Establish a sense of belonging for everyone at your current events. Review your existing offerings to remedy participation barriers (e.g., location, timing, access). Spend time addressing factors that impact your efforts to set a strong foundation for the future. Through this process you may notice that smaller adaptations like a change in venue or updated communications plan can create large shifts making your events more welcoming and inclusive.
- Orient yourself with the resources in the Tacklebox, particularly tu.org/diversity. Other resources elsewhere in the Tacklebox like this "how to" guide – [One TU Youth Education Report](#) – may also help your chapter frame goals to guide you to success.
- Review sample chapter and council specific position descriptions related to diversity, equity and inclusion, create your own, and consider assigning a point person to certain roles.
- Budget. Make sure that your chapter or council budgets appropriately to set your diversity and inclusion efforts up for success.
- Don't go it alone. Review the many resources out there from partners. Guides like the River Network's [Best Practices Guide to Engaging Latino and Hispanic Community Members](#) are often a great place to start.





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Promote your Chapter/ Council to New Audiences:

- Incorporate aspirational communications with positive language, full event details and images of target demographics (people of color, women, youth, etc...) in your communications. You may find [the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation's toolkit](#) helpful to reflect Latino and Hispanic community members.
- Meet people where they are. For example, if your chapter would like to engage with the Latino community, build relations through genuine community connections and gatherings (churches, community centers, etc...).
- Your chapter can [order copies of our Stream Explorers magazines](#) online and have them printed with your own chapter name, website address, contact information and more printed right on them so anyone you hand them to can learn more about TU and easily find your chapter.

Create Events Catered to Target Demographics:

- Learn from the NLC's Women's Initiative on their ideas for [women's focused meetings and seminars](#).
- View this video on [organizing an introductory fly fishing clinic](#) and these chapter templates for women's seminar programs and planning documents.
- [Plan a meaningful youth education event](#) with guidance from this two-page synopsis.
- Start new youth education programs like [Trout in the Classroom](#), [STREAM Girls](#) or a [TU 5 Rivers College clubs](#).
- Get your chapter started with a TU Service Partnership program locally with our vast suite of [resources](#).

Make Them Members:

- Recruit new adult members for half price (\$17.50) at www.tu.org/intro. For every new member your chapter recruits there, you will receive a \$15 rebate at the end of the year. So, for example, after your next women's specific casting clinic, for only \$2.50/ attendee you can buy memberships for everyone.
- Youth can join TU online. [Stream Explorers memberships](#) (up to age 12) are \$12. [TU Teen memberships](#) (age 13 to 18) are \$14. Bulk discounted youth memberships (orders > six are \$8/ea.) are available for purchase. Contact TU's Youth Education staff for details.
- Members of the first responder or military communities are eligible to receive [a free, one-year membership to TU](#).
- Check out tips from the Women's Initiative on how best to [retain these new members](#).

Make Them Leaders:

- Make sure diversity is a target for your chapter or council's leadership recruitment or nominating committee.
- Share with people interested in national-level leadership how [the Diversity and Inclusion Workgroup of the NLC operates](#).
- Consider sending an active chapter teenager to [the TU Teen Summit](#), so that they might stay involved with the national-level Youth Leadership Council.
- Consider sending a member of the first responder or military community who you've engaged to a nationally sponsored trip, so that they might stay involved with the national TU Service Partnership. For more information, contact [TU Volunteer Operations staff](#).

Chapter Youth Education

Once TU has protected, reconnected, or restored a waterway, it is crucial that we engage local communities, especially the next generation of that community, to help them understand what we have done, and why.

To that end, watershed-based environmental education and home-waters oriented fishing education are fundamental to TU.

TU has been working with youth almost since the very beginning. Many chapters had an early interest in youth education, and some piloted creative programs.

In recent years, nearly every chapter is engaged in some sort of youth outreach activity.

TU's Headwaters Youth Education Initiative encompasses a range of programs and projects known as the Stream of Engagement, serving children, teenagers and young adults. From the nationally-recognized, science-based [Trout in the Classroom](#) and Adopt-a-Trout programs to [fly-fishing and conservation camps](#), [teen leadership summits](#) and [college fly-fishing clubs](#), chapters across the country are finding ways to plug into the stream of engagement such that they are bringing the next generation in their communities along as life-long anglers and conservationists.

Here is a listing of some of our key programs:

[Stream Explorers](#)
[Trout in the Classroom](#)
[Adopt-a-Trout](#)
[Youth Camps and Academies](#)
[Summer on the Fly](#)
[STREAM Girls \(Girl Scouts\)](#)
[Boy Scouts Fly Fishing Merit Badge](#)
[TU Teen High School Clubs](#)
[TU Teen Summit](#)
[TU Costa 5 Rivers College Clubs](#)

TU's volunteer-led chapters and state councils run and finance their youth education programs. The national TU Headwaters Youth Education program is staffed with three national-level positions who function to help TU chapters and councils build new partnerships, share resources, start new youth programs, and implement our TU Teen Summit.



The Stream of Engagement ensures that people of any age can "plug-in" to TU and continue their relationship with coldwater conservation and fly fishing through various age-appropriate programs.

Chapter TU Service Partnership Programs

The TU Service Partnership is an effort to bring the TU community and mission to veterans, active-duty military and first responders – specifically members of the fire service, medical, and law enforcement communities – and their families.

Studies by Dr. Herbert Benson and others have proven the therapeutic and rehabilitative attributes inherent in fly fishing, fly tying, and time on the water. When we can bring that joy, peace and healing to our nation's heroes, we do.

Chapters are encouraged to broadly tailor engagements with first responder and military communities – in ways that make the most sense for both chapter resources and local availability – while being intentional about finding ways to sustain relationships with participants.

One such way is to share a TU membership, which is available for free to all Service Partnership participants.

On www.tu.org/service, multiple resources are available including the free membership form, ideas to connect your chapter with partner organizations, a sample program guide, and contact information for the [TU Volunteer Operations staff](#).



FREE 1-YEAR TROUT UNLIMITED MEMBERSHIP TO MILITARY AND FIRST RESPONDERS

As an effort to both serve and engage the military and first responder communities, the Trout Unlimited Service Partnership is pleased to offer a free 1-year membership to new-to-Trout Unlimited members of the medical, fire service, law enforcement, and military communities, including active duty, reserve, Guard, veterans and retirees. This includes a full year of *TROUT* Magazine, local chapter activities like fly-fishing lessons, discounts on travel and fishing gear, opportunities to win trips, prizes and more! If you are or know a first responder or member of the military who could benefit from the nationwide community of passionate anglers and conservationists that is Trout Unlimited, please visit www.tu.org/service and join. Thank you to all who serve, and know that we at Trout Unlimited are here to serve you.

 **TROUT UNLIMITED SERVICE PARTNERSHIP**

WWW.TU.ORG/SERVICE

The graphic features a collage of images on the right side showing various first responders and military personnel, including medical staff, police officers, firefighters, and veterans, alongside a photo of a white pickup truck with 'TROUT UNLIMITED' branding.

Chapter Communications

Effective communications are essential to increasing attendance and participation, inspiring volunteerism, and raising funds to complete our conservation work. Reaching members, potential members and supporters requires a healthy mix of print, digital and social media communications and the use of effective messages and images.

Email Communications:

[Communicating by e-mail to members](#) and supporters is an incredibly powerful way to reach a large audience quickly, easily and affordably. However, e-mail communications only reach a small portion – typically 30-40 percent – of the intended audience. By using the latest tools and following best practices for email success, you can ensure your e-mail messages are being sent effectively and being read and acted upon.

When e-mailing to a group as large as a chapter's membership, please remember that there are several federal SPAM related laws and requirements that apply to this type of mass e-mailing. These restrictions include having an obvious way for e-mail recipients to opt out of the e-mail chain, inclusion of a physical address, a clear statement of why they are receiving the e-mail, and more. Failing to adhere to these regulations could have significant consequences to your chapter or the organization as a whole. Because of this, TU offers volunteer leaders the ability to easily e-mail your membership all together with the utmost regard for a member's privacy and preferred communication preferences through [the Leaders Only Tools section online](#). This tool is designed as a way for you to communicate important information to your membership without concern for the rapidly changing and complex federal requirements or costs associated with e-mailing vendors.

Print Communications:

[Print communications](#) – from postcard and newsletter mailings to posters, flyers, handouts and more – can seem costly, but they are incredibly effective at getting the word out. Investing in print should be part of every chapter's communications strategy.

Print communications can be the single biggest expense of a chapter, so establishing funding should be a priority. The cost of publishing can be covered in a number of ways. Selling advertising can certainly cover much of the expense of a regular newsletter; however, it's important to note that if your chapter receives annual revenue from advertising over \$1,000, the IRS qualifies that as unrelated business income and requires the chapter to file an IRS Form 990-T. Some chapters solicit donations from their members to cover the mailing and printing costs, but in accordance with [TU's by-laws](#), chapter dues cannot be required for chapter membership nor can they be a requisite for receiving the newsletter or e-newsletter. Another strategy for reducing costs, particularly for large chapters, is to acquire a bulk mail permit or to contract with a bulk mail company to print and mail your publications. Anyone wanting to mail via nonprofit rates will have to prepare a letter on TU letterhead for the USPS that reads something like this: "Please accept this letter as a request for a non-profit status extension to the post office located in City, State Zip. Trout Unlimited established permit number is 0389596. This number resides at the Merrifield, VA post office." There is also a form that needs to be completed. It can be obtained from the Post Office. Depending upon the mailing, the associated fee may chew up the postal savings.

Whether you are e-mailing or sending a snail-mailed piece, you will need access to the member roster from the Leaders Only Tools section of [tu.org](#). The roster syncs nightly with the information on file in the database at TU national; therefore, the information displayed in your roster matches all of the information on file for that member.

Download your roster... what do you see? Chances are you see holes in the data like, missing e-mails, bad physical addresses and even a few typos.

It is always best for a TU member to update his or her own information by calling: 1-800-834-2419, e-mailing trout@tu.org, but we know that in many cases this just doesn't happen and oftentimes chapter member will look to you as the go-between to TU national and will ask you to update their information. As a volunteer leader, you can quickly and easily update a member's contact information on your roster in the [Leaders Only Tools section](#) by clicking the pencil icon next to the member's name.



The TU Brand Toolkit is one of many resources available to help chapters and councils benefit from and magnify the key messages, imagery and brand identity of TU in their home waters.

Websites & Social Media

In this digital age, having [a strong and compelling website](#) is essential to spreading the word and growing support. Your website should be the central clearing house of all things related to your work and activities, and your outward communications should all emanate from and point to the website.

Trout Unlimited offers free website hosting services for chapters and councils. Contact your Volunteer Operations staff to learn about this option. Many chapters who have board members with digital communication skills choose to build their own sites using open source platforms such as Squarespace, Wordpress and others.

One of the major benefits of using the the TU free website, beyond the cost savings, is that our staff are available to train and support new volunteers in editing and managing the site if there is a turnover in board leadership.

Having your chapter's events and activities available in the palm of your members' and supporters' hands through [social media outreach](#) is a great way to increase awareness and activate hard-to-reach communities. Particularly among younger members and supporters, social media is fast becoming the preferred way to engage with organizations like TU. Your chapter leadership should also consider joining TU's growing online community, particularly the Leaders Forum. Learn more about the TU online community [in this FAQ section](#).

Traditional Media:

Expanding your reach beyond your existing audience requires reaching well beyond the limits of your e-mail lists, social media followers and existing event attendees. There are many more people who have never heard of your great work but would happily participate if they knew you needed their help. [Print, radio and television media](#) remain powerful outlets to reach this audience.

Brand & Communications Strategy:

Underlying all effective communications strategies are the messages and images used to attract and inspire our members and supporters. The Tacklebox is full of the ins-and-outs of [branding, logos for download, our style-guide](#) and tips on the messages that work to reach and attract more people.

Membership Recruitment & Engagement

Chapters are the front line – and often the front door – when it comes to how new members join the organization. Studies report that most new members join organizations like TU because:

- They were asked by a member to get involved.
- They know about the group because family or friends are involved.
- They enjoyed participating in an activity that was sponsored by the group.
- They are concerned with their local home waters.

New members can come from anywhere in your communities; however, most historically have been drawn to TU because of:

- 1) Conservation
- 2) Community
- 3) Fishing

Conservation: They have conservation interests. Surveys consistently demonstrate that most TU members join because they are concerned about rivers and aquatic ecosystems that they have connected with through fishing. They have a vested interest in the health and viability of their “home waters.” Many members have expressed that they want to give something back to the resource that they enjoy and ensure that they pass on a healthy resource to their children.

Community: They want to make friends with shared interests or join to be with current friends. Often members have been encouraged by a friend to become involved. Friendship is a powerful motivator, and by keeping activities and events fun, you create an organization that casts a broader net when it comes to membership involvement.

Fishing: They like to fish or want to learn to fish and being a member of TU opens doors to opportunities and information. For many TU members, conservation concerns have largely stemmed from an initial interest in fishing as a sport and a love of the outdoors. By attracting people to the sport, you can then educate them on the need for conservation.



Free chapter and council websites offered by TU provide easy and effective ways to get the word out without the cost of setting up your own website or the learning curve to manage it.



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The [Membership Memo](#) is the comprehensive guide to the information about our membership types and recruitment options. The [Membership Recruitment & Engagement](#) section in the Tacklebox covers the tools, tips and tactics that chapters use to grow their membership and expand their community impact.

Chapter-acquired members renew at a higher rate than other members and are more likely to become active members who attend chapter meetings, come to workdays, and serve as chapter leaders. To encourage and help local chapters to recruit members, a new member rebate is given to chapters who recruit new members via the hidden link www.tu.org/intro, the [Chapter Recruitment Spreadsheet](#) or the [Membership Application Brochure](#). To receive proper credit for this rebate, the new member must select your chapter when joining online at www.tu.org/intro, or your chapter's 3-digit chapter # must be written on the [Chapter Recruitment Spreadsheet](#).

The chapter will receive a \$15 rebate at the end of the fiscal year if new member who joins at the \$17.50 introductory rate. If a new member joins at a higher membership level, the higher the rebate.

Chapters recruiting new members should consider doing so with TU's [Membership Application Brochure](#). The brochure is a comprehensive piece to help introduce people to our organization who don't know anything about TU. It explains who we are, what we do, where and how we work — and it is a great recruiting tool for new members.

Always send membership dues and donations to: Trout Unlimited, PO Box 98166, Washington, DC 20090

An additional benefit of soliciting new members using www.tu.org/intro or the [Chapter Recruitment Spreadsheet](#) is that you can track these members in the Leaders Only Tools section, under Membership Changes Report.

Fun, interesting, and informative events can help recruit new members and supporters to your chapter and build community. Whether your chapter offers a monthly meeting, develops hands-on volunteer restoration projects, offers regular local fishing trips, creates social activities to build community, hosts women's specific fishing clinics, takes first responders or veterans fishing, or facilitates youth education programs and projects, opportunities for your chapter to recruit new members come when you reach beyond your chapter roster into your surrounding community and spread the good word of coldwater fisheries conservation and show folks how fun TU can be.

Monthly chapter gatherings — often held on a weekday evening — have long been the cornerstone of our TU community, and they continue to be an important event we offer. Business is discussed, information is passed on, and future plans are made. Many chapters include an entertainment element, such as a guest speaker or fishing-related presentation, to help inform their members of local, regional, or national topics of interest. It is important to remember that your members' time is valuable and that keeping chapter meetings consistent, organized, and to the point, is a great way to keep members coming back and increase their involvement. The chapter president should facilitate the meeting and be prepared with an agenda that is followed throughout the meeting. Being inclusive of new members and actively involving them will help to grow membership. Create a social, yet controllable and effective, atmosphere where comments are shared yet decision making can be done.

However, weekday evenings may not be possible for everyone, or you may find a “meeting” is just not a compelling hook for all audiences. Consider offering a range of activities on a range of days throughout the course of the year, including weekday meetings, [social events at a bar or brewery](#), [family-friendly fishing](#), volunteer opportunities on a weekend, etc... It's also important to consider the location of your events within the geography of your chapter's territory. By giving people more choice on when, where and how to connect to your chapter, they are more likely to participate.

Be sure to reach out and invite people and partner organizations who reflect the diversity your chapter may lack. Then, be sure to welcome everyone who shows up to a TU meeting or event and ensure that these folks are provided the opportunity to make real connections with people in the chapter. Connections lead to engagement and retention, meaning that your work to diversify your chapter will have a lasting impact. By thinking about and planning to address diversity in your chapter, it will provide that your chapter has greater adaptability, resiliency, and new human resources to accomplish more meaningful outcomes for coldwater conservation.

TROUT UNLIMITED

Join Trout Unlimited

Join Trout Unlimited today at the special introductory rate of just \$17.50. Help protect and restore our nation's magnificent trout and salmon fisheries. This low rate is for new members only and \$15 of your \$17.50 will go to your local chapter / the chapter you select below (more if you join at a higher membership level).

PLUS for an extra ten bucks we'll send you an item from our overstocked inventory. You'll get a mystery gift along with the pleasure of knowing you're doing a little more to support TU's great work.

Chapter*

Select Chapter

\$17.50 Chapter Intro Rate	\$27.50 Intro Rate + Gift	\$35 Regular	\$55 Family
\$100 Sponsor	\$250 Conservator	\$500 Stewardship	\$1,000 Griffith Circle

Chapter 5: Council Basics and Resources

Chapters in a region are organized into a council. Most are organized by state boundaries; however, some councils are made up of more than one state (for example the Mid-Atlantic council). Some chapters operate outside of the council structure due to the lack of nearby chapters (for example 607 - Sagebrush chapter in Nevada.) There are 37 councils of TU. In most cases, the council serves as an umbrella organization for its chapters, state-wide.

The council officers are made up of volunteers from around the state who may have previously served or are currently serving as officers or directors of a local chapter board of directors. Council officers are elected by chapter representatives. Councils are the key link between the TU staff and local chapters and play a critical role in advocating for trout and salmon at the state level.

The successful operation of a TU council is very much dependent on the degree and depth of commitment of the chapters and the council leadership. The council is not simply another chapter and should be regarded as a coalition, the vital thread that binds all the chapters together for mutual support and assistance. The council, therefore, deserves the active participation of every chapter in its state.

A council tends to bring chapters closer together, and experience has proven that a strong council usually results in strong, effective chapters, and vice versa. Like a TU chapter, councils are required to have their own employer identification number (EIN) and file their own tax forms with the IRS. Because of this councils are financially independent from the national organization.

Key council responsibilities include:

- Facilitate communication between volunteers in the state/region and TU staff.
- Ensure that TU members within the state are effectively represented and served by all levels of TU's organization.
- Work with TU staff and all available resource experts to form statewide policy for TU.
- Provide routine organizational, administrative and supervisory support for chapters in the state/region.
- Work as representatives with important government and private groups that affect trout and salmon resources.
- Work on projects of statewide importance.
- Work with other councils and TU staff on regional projects.
- Act as an arbitrator or mediator if problems arise that cannot be resolved within the chapter, such as interpretations of council and chapter bylaws, personality problems among officers, etc...
- Coordinate the financial activity and financial reporting of local chapters throughout the state/region.
- Ensure that the council files its Annual Financial Report before the May 15th deadline each year and also assist chapters in the state/region to do the same.
- Recommend the chartering, rechartering and dechartering of chapters.
- Take responsibility for the assignment of zip codes to chapters within the state(s.) For more information about your council's zip codes and their chapter assignment, contact TU's [Volunteer Operations staff](#).



Council leaders play a critical role in helping recruit, train, guide and support the volunteers in the chapters in their state.

A TU council, like a chapter, should be structured to take maximum advantage of valuable volunteer time and talent. Generally, the best policy is: keep it simple. An organizational structure that is too complicated and involved will turn people off and provide more chances for “weak links” to develop. The council is a representative body made up of appointed or elected delegates from its member chapters - all the chapters that come under the jurisdiction of the council covering a particular state or region.

There are several possible methods of apportioning representation. Some examples:

- The president of each chapter and one additional delegate.
- The president of each chapter and one additional delegate for every 50 members or major fraction thereof.
- The president of each chapter, one additional delegate for every 50 members and the coordinator of two or more of each chapter’s key committees such as conservation or membership.

EXAMPLES	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Chapter presidents + one additional delegate/chapter	Simple and small chapters will not feel they are being overwhelmed by larger chapters.	Limits the pool of council volunteers and larger chapters may object.
Chapter presidents + one additional delegate for every 50 chapter members	Relatively equitable system of chapter representation with good human resource pool.	Smaller chapters may feel overwhelmed by larger chapters' delegations.
Chapter presidents + one additional delegate for every 50 chapter members + key chapter committee coordinators (e.g. conservation or membership)	Equal representation, sufficient numbers, the desirability of having important chapter committee heads actively involved in council.	May become cumbersome in larger councils and chapters may have difficulty recruiting volunteers for positions that automatically have council responsibilities.

These points should be seriously considered in shaping a formula for determining chapter representation. Certain factors which may be pertinent to smaller councils may not be major concerns with larger councils, and vice versa. However, a good volunteer pool is essential regardless of size. The number of potential volunteers at the council level is much more limited than on the chapter level, so it is important that a sufficient number of people are involved and the workload distributed as fairly and uniformly as possible.

TU councils vary considerably from state to state and region to region. However, some good councils around the country do share some common practices:

- Council meetings are usually held quarterly.
- Meetings are regular from year to year and scheduled well, as in 4-6 months, ahead of time so people can set their calendars accordingly.
- In larger states, councils move the sites of meetings around, allowing different chapters to be “hosts” and become more involved with the council.
- Many councils hold committee meetings on a Saturday or Sunday morning, with the full council convening in the afternoon.
- Executive Committees meet at least once prior to each council meeting (and sometimes as often as monthly) to establish priorities, formulate an agenda, and set specific plans and recommendations to be presented to the council for consideration.
- Board meeting agendas are prepared carefully to include resource, business, and organizational issues where relevant. Keep in mind that turnover in chapter officers requires some redundancy in the agenda and presentations.
- One of the annual meetings includes lots of FUN. If it can be arranged, a two-day meeting held at a site where there is good fishing allows for the necessary time on serious business items, plenty of sharing between different chapters, a money making banquet and perhaps even a speaker. People will look forward to and plan on being there the following year. New chapter officers should be offered incentives to attend and become part of the council deliberations.



Chapter Support

One of the most important functions of a council is to support the chapters in its territory. If a chapter is struggling to find new leaders, relevant projects, or support from its community, the council is often the best group to help the chapter leadership identify what resources it needs to be successful. TU [Volunteer Operations staff](#) is here to support councils in this work.

Council Advocacy

A council is in the unique position to be the coordinating presence for advocacy for TU state-wide. Many TU councils have been effective advocates for trout, mobilizing their members across the state to take action around important state laws and regulations. The key to effective state-level advocacy is a well-coordinated, through-out campaign that is based in science and backed up with effective communications. There are a lot of moving parts, so perhaps most important is the coordination piece. TU staff in your state or TU Government Affairs staff are available to help councils with their advocacy.

The National Leadership Council

The role of the National Leadership Council (NLC) and its rules for functioning are detailed in Article IV. of the [TU by-laws](#). The NLC is the volunteer body that helps to set the direction of TU and is made up of one representative elected from each state council. The NLC has three purposes:

- Establish [National Conservation Agenda](#)
- Facilitate implementation of [National Conservation Agenda](#)
- Build the organizational capacity of TU

The NLC accomplishes these three tasks by being a conduit between councils and TU national. NLC Representatives bring issues and concerns from their states to the national level and then bring decisions and initiatives from the national level back to their councils. The NLC meets annually in person at the Annual Meeting and via teleconferences throughout the year. There is a stipend provided to each council to help cover the costs of NLC Representatives attending the Annual Meeting. NLC Representatives also serve on workgroups that focus on specific conservation or organizational issues that span more than two states. NLC workgroups are established to address regional or organization-wide issues. These workgroups are composed mainly, but not exclusively, of NLC members and are supported by one or more staff members. There are two main categories of workgroups: conservation and organizational.

Conservation Workgroups

Great Lakes

Native Trout

Delaware River

Driftless Area Restoration Effort

Responsible Mining & Energy

Land Conservancy

Access

Climate Change

Organizational Workgroups

Diversity and Inclusion

New Initiatives

Grassroots

Communications

Youth Education

The composition and tasks of workgroups will change with time. To find out more about current NLC workgroups visit www.tu.org/nlc or ask your council's NLC Representative.

The purpose of the [National Conservation Agenda](#) (NCA) is to chart the course for all components of TU including national staff, councils, chapters and members to work together on a shared enterprise to implement TU's mission. The most recent NCA was adopted in September of 2016 and can be viewed in full online. The NLC also nominates the grassroots trustees of the Board of Trustees.

Council Communications

Communicating to your membership and to potential members and supporters what TU in your state is doing is, in some respects, as important as what you actually do.

The TU council has a unique role to play combining the many moving parts of TU state-wide – your chapter's accomplishments, perhaps the work of TU staff, your council level-advocacy, etc... – and telling a cohesive and compelling story.

The chapter above details important communications tactics for chapters to consider that are relevant for councils as well.

In addition to communicating to members of TU in your council, the council leadership has the unique job of communicating with the chapter leaders in the state. Often councils will organize a newsletter specifically for their chapter leaders to disseminate important updates, highlight chapter success stories and promote upcoming council events. A report in the [Leaders Only Tools section](#) of tu.org called, "Role Leaders" will display for you the names and contact information for all leaders listed in chapters within your council.

TU Volunteer Operations staff coordinates at least two council chair and co-chair teleconference meetings per year, and on occasion council chairs are invited to participate with the quarterly NLC Rep calls. Council chairs are also encouraged to meet in person at TU's annual meeting and in small groups at the Regional Rendezvous trainings. Attending TU's annual meeting is a legitimate expense to be covered by the council. TU Volunteer Operations staff covers the costs of the teleconferences. It is expected that all council chairs, or a designated alternate, participate in these teleconferences to ensure good communication within the organization.



Wisconsin Trout

Summer 2018

Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited
1015 FISHING Road
Oshkosh, WI 54901
www.wisconsintrout.org

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OSHKOSH, WI



A BEAUTIFUL RAINBOW TROUT
Veterans from the Milwaukee VA hospital recently participated in SEWTU's Veterans On The Fly program at Rushing Waters Fisheries in Palmyra.

WITU chapters committed to serving veterans

Three chapters make difficult decision to cut ties with Project Healing Waters.

By Mike Kuhn, Council Vice Chair and VSP Coordinator

With the recent rise in popularity of TU's Veterans Service Partnership (VSP), many chapters have increased efforts to serve our military veterans and welcome them into our TU community. Here in Wisconsin, some of our chapters have been working specifically with veterans for more than a decade.

Our most popular programs involved a partnership between TU chapters in Milwaukee (SEWTU), Madison (SWTU), and Green Bay (GBTU) and the Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing (PHWFF) organization. These local chapters have been providing fly-fishing instruction to local veterans at VA hospitals as part of their recreational therapy programs.

According to their mission statement, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. is dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active military service personnel and disabled veterans through fly fishing and associated activities including education and outings.

Over the last year, the PHWFF organization has become more stringent about enforcing a policy asking local volunteers to verify the disability status of veterans before allowing them to participate. This has put our volunteers in a difficult position. If veterans are receiving treatment at the VA hospital for some reason, we've always welcomed them to join our fly fishing classes, regardless of their disability status. Sometimes we've even invited VA staff or a veteran spouse or children to participate.

The program leads and volunteers at each of these three programs – Milwaukee, Madison and Green Bay – have made the difficult decision to cut ties with the PHWFF organization. However, our commitment to serving veterans in these local

See VSP page 4



Wisconsin TU announces policy priorities

By Matt Kneeger and Mike Kuhn

Every year, trout anglers pay an extra \$10 fee on their fishing license for a trout stamp, and the funds go directly into habitat work that makes fishing better. Most anglers happily support paying the fee, particularly as they are aware that funding for natural resources has been reduced in recent years. However, the trout stamp fee has not been raised since 2006. WITU supports a moderate increase to the trout stamp fee, provided it continues to be managed in a segregated account that directly funds trout stream habitat improvements.

WITU has a strong partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Whether fisheries biologists improving trout habitat in streams, technicians operating heavy equipment to restore a degraded stream, or runoff management specialists working with landowners to minimize erosion from uplands, DNR staff do essential work in protecting and restoring trout streams.

In recent years, funding has been slashed to these critical areas of DNR, and recent heavy equipment sales are making restoration projects more expensive to undertake. WITU supports fully funding biologist and technician positions in the Fisheries Bureau, nonpoint source pollution management specialists in the Runoff Management Bureau, and review of the heavy equipment sales so that our trout streams can thrive, and Wisconsin can continue to attract more than 355,000 annual angling visitors.

The funding for county conservation departments that work with private landowners to reduce polluted runoff to trout streams is at 60 percent of what it was 20 years ago. WITU supports fully funding county conservation departments, and the state funds they utilize to implement conservation on private lands.

Keep an eye out for upcoming action alerts to find out what you can do to push for these important policies. We'd also recommend inviting your elected officials out to a stream restoration project this summer. It's a great way to showcase the work we're doing while strengthening relationships with decision makers.

The Wisconsin Council publishes a quarterly newspaper which is mailed to every member in the state, with additional copies used as handouts at events and for advocacy and lobbying activities at the state capitol.

Chapter 6: Chapter & Council Board Operations

Developing Members into Active Volunteers

Active members translate into strong chapters which lead strong state councils, all of which contribute to a unified, cohesive national organization. Developing new members into active volunteers should be a high priority.

It is important to ensure that your chapter provides an environment that offers members various opportunities to engage with the organization.

When a new member comes to a chapter event, does your chapter have a plan in place? Some things to consider include:

- Make them comfortable. Designate a volunteer greeter at meetings.
- Get to know their interest and match that to an initial volunteer task.
- Have a plan. Do not let someone slip away because at the time they offered to help, you did not have something for them to do. Keep a list of things that people can always do.
- Keep it simple at first. Realize that often people feel intimidated to take on big tasks when they are new to an organization. Do not ask them to put out the next newsletter right off the bat, instead invite them to help stuff envelopes.
- Provide opportunity with varying levels of responsibility. Effective leaders create an organizational environment conducive to member involvement and the successful retention of loyal members.



New members are excited to connect with the TU community. When they first participate, whether at a monthly gathering or volunteer event, find out what motivated them to attend, what they are most interested in doing and find ways to grow their involvement over time with small, incremental leadership development steps.

People are more likely to say “yes” when they understand the potential rewards. Keep this in mind when asking someone to take on a new task. Instead of saying “I can’t find anybody else to coordinate this outing. Will you do it?” Think first about what rewards might be associated with it for that person, and then tailor the reward to the individual. For a new angler, you might suggest, “it would provide an opportunity for you to make new fishing partners.” For a young member, “it would be a chance to learn organizing skills.” And for a long-time member, “you’d be making an important contribution to the chapter’s conservation goals.”

Delegate. Consider taking an item from your to-do list today and finding a capable volunteer to take it over. It is one less task for you, and an opportunity for someone else to become involved and take more ownership in your chapter or council. The whole objective is to cultivate relationships and train people for positions of increasing responsibility—depending on their talents and interests.

There are important reasons for taking the time to delegate:

- Any time you perform a task that someone else could do, you keep them from learning, and you take time away from a project that only you can do
- Being given responsibility (and, thereby, trust) can motivate and involve volunteers at a new level
- Delegation strengthens a group by giving people the experience needed to back up one another
- Nothing motivates better than success, and a well-delegated task enables your volunteers to experience success in a direct and meaningful way.

Provide recognition and feedback. It is very important for volunteers to know that they are doing a good job and that they are recognized for their efforts. This will make them feel that they are a real asset to the group and encourage them to take on more responsibility in the future.

Invest time. Invite a volunteer to sit on a committee or ask a committee member to be a coordinator for that committee. Set up a support system within the chapter for mentoring new leaders. Invite a volunteer to sit in on Volunteer Operations led Leaders Only Tools trainings or a one-on-one leadership training. Spend the time to develop an up-and-coming volunteer’s skills.

It is always a good idea to ask your chapter these questions:

1. Have you identified members that might volunteer if asked?
2. How are you making volunteering rewarding or attractive?
3. Have you made participation easier by removing barriers and articulating expectations like time commitment, abilities/ skills, opportunities, etc...?
4. Have you set up a support system within the chapter for orientation and training?

Leadership Development

Leaders have a lot to do with the quality of a chapter. A board without experienced leadership is often a chapter or council without direction. Because of this, every board needs to plan for leadership development.

Volunteer leadership development training workshops and resource materials are available through TU's [Volunteer Operations staff](#), and in the [Tacklebox](#).

TU's regional meetings are also great opportunities for volunteer leaders to experience the wide range of everything TU does. Four to six regional meetings are held each year, one in the West, Mid-South, Mid-Atlantic, Upper Midwest, Northeast and Southeast. Each of these meetings is coordinated by [volunteer operations staff](#) and the host councils (which rotates within the region from year to year.) Each regional meeting includes fishing opportunities, educational seminars on both conservation and engagement-type topics, business meetings, and fun-filled evenings. For information about these regional events, please visit our [online events calendar](#) or contact your [volunteer operations staff](#).

Building an Engaged Board of Directors



Board Succession Planning

Your TU chapter or council is a vital, living thing and, as such, needs a constant infusion of "new blood"—new ideas, energy and enthusiasm—in the form of new leaders.

Many chapters and councils suffer because board members or other leaders are unwilling to give up the reins or no one has been groomed to take over leadership. Before you know it, you're doing the "leader shuffle," moving the same people around in leadership roles.

As a result, the group may become cliquish or stagnant and be perceived as unattractive to the new blood it so badly needs.

Developing new chapter or council leaders requires thoughtful attention and long-term planning in order to insure the ongoing vitality of any chapter or council.

Many chapter and council leaders find themselves concerned that there is no one to replace them. They may be feeling burnt-out and ready to let go of the reins; however, they fear that without their leadership the chapter or council will fold.

If this sounds familiar to you, ask yourself the questions, "Why doesn't my chapter have candidates for all of the officer positions?", "How did we find and recruit our current leaders?", "Do our most active members know we need and want their help?", "Can each board member name several active members who they have proactively built a personal relationship with?" Only by defining the underlying reason are you able to find a long-term solution. Common examples of what stops TU members from accepting leadership roles include:

- They have watched others before them burn-out
- They are unaware of how much time it will take/ not enough time;
- Doesn't sound exciting;
- Lack of understanding of programs/ unclear, general goals;
- 'Old guard' unfriendly to newcomers/ too exclusive;
- Insecure about skills; or
- Fear of commitment

Although solutions to this problem will be unique to each chapter or council, there are a few common tactics any chapter or council can employ to get started on a leadership development plan. Here are some ideas:

Watch for the up-and-coming natural leaders in your chapter. There will certainly be some people who articulate and pursue TU's and your chapter's goals with noticeably more energy and success. Other chapter members listen to them, and they are obviously highly motivated. Encourage these budding leaders to assume leadership roles and work with you and other officers on chapter management. Try to identify what leadership roles suit these members, then ask for and encourage their participation. Cultivate relationships and train people for positions of increasing responsibility—depending on their talents and interests.

Evaluate your recruitment criteria. Make sure your nominating committee is bringing in new board members with leadership experience. And be sure to let the candidates know they are encouraged to take on officer responsibilities.

Pay attention to term limits and find a new role for the "old guard." Long serving volunteer leaders make great nominating or conservation committee coordinators, for example. Do not allow former leaders to rotate back on the board over and over again. Term limits are not personal, they are institutional. Every healthy non-profit organization recognizes the need to develop and expand their pool of leaders. That is why term limits were designed—to structurally create healthy turnover and renewal among leaders. Term limits do at least three important things. They:

1. Force you to work at renewing the board and other leadership positions.
2. Allow you to replace leaders who have not worked out.
3. Allow "star" leaders to take a break.

Check your bylaws to determine how they already address this issue. If your chapter has not been enforcing term limits, we suggest you put this topic on the agenda for an upcoming board meeting. If your bylaws do not cover the issue of term limits then initiate a discussion within the chapter or council and consider adding term limits to the bylaws. If you cannot find new leaders to step forward, have a frank discussion about why people are not interested in becoming leaders. Then come up with a plan to begin to remedy the one or two most pressing problems this year. Your chapter will be stronger for it.

Evaluate your training and leadership development opportunities. Help willing candidates learn and obtain the tools they need to take on added duties. Serving as a committee coordinator is an excellent occasion to learn. Invite a volunteer to sit in on Leaders Only Tools or New Chapter Volunteer trainings. Spend the time to develop an emerging volunteer's skills. Set up a support system within the chapter for mentoring new leaders. As new chapter leaders come on board, pass on your valuable knowledge of the chapter's specific situation: its relationships (internal and external), needs, abilities, and limitations. Share the secrets that you have had passed to you and that you have discovered.

Finally, as a chapter president or council chair whose office term is up, your job is not completed until you have officially passed the torch to the new leader. Completing the circle of leadership is both your legacy and your responsibility. The on-going function of the organization depends on a smooth management transition. Leadership in any organization is important and investing in a new leader is especially important.

Set up a time to meet with the incoming leader to talk and pass on information that he or she will need in this new role. The following is a checklist of things that you will need to hand over or convey to the new leader, in order to make the transition a smooth one:

- This TU Leadership Manual
- Chapter/ council bylaws
- If applicable, chapter incorporation, gaming license, certificate of state tax-exempt status, etc.
- Important local contact information
- Copy of chapter or council's financial records and CEI data
- Record of meeting minutes from the last two years
- Past newsletters
- Any long-term strategic campaign plans developed by the group
- Program files
- Media contact list
- List of commitments and deadlines that need follow-through
- Supplies (TU letterhead and envelopes, membership materials, etc...)
- Any equipment that was purchased by the chapter/council for the leader (computer, fax machine, etc.)

Each chapter and council will develop their own ritual for handing over the reins of leadership. Think about handing over the title at a special chapter or annual meeting, at a yearly event (e.g., dinner, lunch or fundraising event,) or using the local media to create a sense of importance (and gain some free publicity.) Invest in the occasion to re-enforce the importance of this transition.

Do not forget to ask for help if you need it. Not only can your council likely help your chapter in these efforts, but volunteer operations staff is only a phone call or email away.

Running a Productive Meeting

TU chapters and councils conduct their business primarily during face-to-face meetings; however, some chapters and councils are choosing webinar or teleconference technology to facilitate their meetings, particularly in geographically vast areas. Regardless of how and where you meet, it's important to first and foremost thank your volunteers and honor their time and commitment for attending.

The fastest way to lose volunteers for your chapter or council is to have ineffective meetings, or to allow members of the board create an atmosphere where new ideas are stymied, or where time is wasted discussing issues which have already been resolved.

All volunteers live busy lives and some are balancing more commitments and challenges than others. Respecting their time and creating efficient board meetings will help keep them engaged and motivated to participate.

There are eight key elements to a successful meeting:

Bylaws Adherence: Keep a copy of your chapter or council bylaws available for reference at every meeting.

Decision-Making/ Robert's Rules of Order: Nothing is more frustrating to a group than not understanding how decisions are made. Be clear about how the group is going to make up its collective mind and then stick to it.

Effective Conflict Management: Conflict need not be destructive. Handled effectively, differences can result in new and better ideas and projects, as well as a stronger sense of "team" for having weathered the storm together.

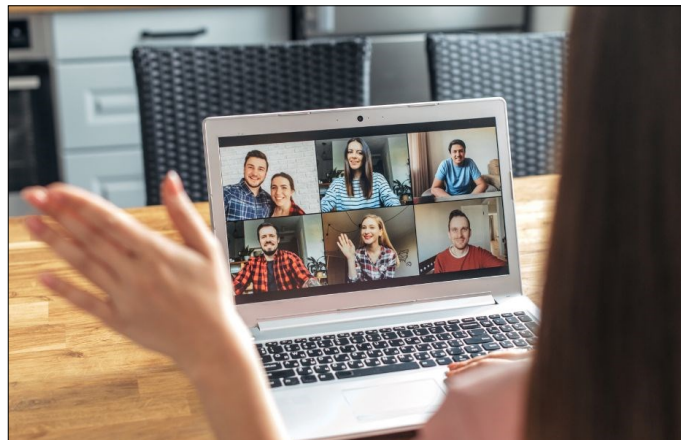
Accountability: In order to avoid a situation of resentment among board members who have different standards of performance, it is important that a chapter or council board hold one another accountable. This approach establishes respect among board members who are held to the same high standards and ensures that poor performers feel pressure to improve.

An Agenda/ Preparation: Every meeting should have a written agenda that allows the participants to come to the meeting with a clear idea of the goals for the meeting and allows the meeting to stay on track. Preparation for the most important business meetings should include advance mailing of the draft agenda and attachments.

Facilitation/ Leadership: The role of the facilitator is to use the agenda to keep the meeting on track on behalf of the group. The facilitator should also make sure that all participants are heard from and the conversation remains constructive.

Time/ Attendance: Start and end your meetings on time. Clarify to all board members expectations on attendance (e.g. must attend 7 out of 10 board meetings per year to keep board position.)

Inclusion/ Atmosphere: A good atmosphere is central to a successful meeting. If people have fun, they will be more likely to come back. Find a meeting place that is consistent with the nature of the meeting but varies to retain interest. Remember that a volunteer-based group depends for its very survival on the recruitment of new members and potential leaders. Identify members who are potential leaders and include them in a board meeting. In order to ensure all attendees, feel welcome, especially newcomers, take the time, make the effort, to greet all attendees.



While meeting in person creates greater opportunities to cement relationships, the convenience of Zoom board meetings enables better attendance, encourages new volunteers to join board meetings and can allow for more efficient sessions.

Before Meetings:

1. Establish rules of conduct

- ◇ Ensure that everyone agrees on how to work together by setting basic ground rules
- ◇ Clarify how the board makes decisions
- ◇ Stress the importance of respect at and away from the board table
- ◇ Agree on how to disagree

2. Require some advance reading

- ◇ The agenda
- ◇ Save time during board meetings by preparing draft board recommendations in advance, when appropriate
- ◇ Keep the reading short and sweet, including past meeting minutes
- ◇ Have available to all volunteer leaders important documents (either digitally or has printed handouts) including (but not limited to):
 - Roster of the board members with bios, job descriptions, board responsibilities
 - Committee lists, coordinators, job descriptions, advisors
 - Legal documents and policies, bylaws, policy on conflict of interest, travel expenses, insurance summaries
 - Financial statements and budget
 - Strategic framework and current plan
 - Programs and service
 - Upcoming and annual events

3. Make board training a priority at every meeting

- ◇ Give board members a broad overview of the organization at least once (vision, mission, history, structure)
- ◇ Pick a particular section of this Leadership Manual for a focus area (fundraising, membership development, risk management, etc...)

During Meetings:

1. Stay on topic
 - ◇ Clearly define the outcomes you wish to achieve to prevent lengthy, unfocused discussions
 - ◇ Make sure everyone understands each task before the board
 - ◇ Do not let the board get sidetracked by personal issues
2. Use consent agendas
 - ◇ To save time, combine routine items into one item for the board's approval
 - ◇ Ease your board into consent agendas until everyone is comfortable with the idea
3. Focus on decision-making
 - ◇ Change the format of meetings from show-and-tell to give-and-take
 - ◇ Encourage committee development to do the planning work outside the board meeting
4. Involve all board members – ensuring everyone has the opportunity to speak
 - ◇ Let board members learn from others
 - ◇ Stress that interactive learning is as important for long-time members as it is for new members
5. Make sure the facilitator (chapter president/ council chair) remains neutral
6. Choose the right meeting place and room set-up
 - ◇ Try holding meetings at a site that will help board members connect with the organization's mission
 - ◇ Vary the meeting site throughout the year
 - ◇ Seek a quiet place
 - ◇ Consider the seating arrangements
7. Keep finances understandable
 - ◇ Know how much is too much information
 - ◇ Make sure the financial reports the board receives are timely and accurate
 - ◇ Teach the board to look for expenses or income that is significantly over or under budget
 - ◇ Ensure compliance with the [Financial & Property Controls Policy](#) and reporting requirements
8. Focus on the mission
 - ◇ Provide context by reviewing the mission and strategic plan to keep it fresh and relevant.
9. Make the most of the minutes
 - ◇ Include the basics and do not provide unnecessary detail
 - ◇ Record information that could be helpful during a financial or legal review
 - ◇ Circulate the minutes a few days after the meeting
10. Have a good time
 - ◇ Never underestimate the power of humor... or fishing.

After Meetings:

- ◇ Encourage reflection
- ◇ Critique the meeting
- ◇ Conduct a board self-assessment every three years
- ◇ Conduct a board member self-evaluation

Basic Board Room Etiquette:

1. Encourage good attendance
2. Develop a meeting structure
3. Start and end on time
4. Set meeting dates far in advance
5. Follow up with no-shows
6. Ask board members for feedback on meeting dates
7. Encourage relationship building
8. Schedule breaks
9. Acknowledge milestones such as birthdays, anniversaries, promotions, retirements and especially turnover in your own chapter or council
10. Ask for help when you need it: Seek the professional guidance of a consultant, mediator or Volunteer Operations staff if necessary
11. Encourage open communication

Effectively Managing Conflict in Your TU Chapter or Council

You joined TU to be a part of an angling community dedicated to our mission, not to deal with unpleasant conflict or unhappy volunteers. But it's important to remember first, that all volunteer organizations have conflict; and, second, that good things can (and often do) arise from conflict that is effectively managed.

Conflict need not be destructive. Handled effectively, differences can result in new and better ideas and projects, as well as a stronger sense of "team" for having weathered the storm together. When that happens, future conflicts are more likely to also be handled constructively. Conflict side-stepped or not handled in a thoughtful manner can have devastating results. At minimum, such situations chew up valuable volunteer time, burn out existing volunteer leaders, and discourage new leaders from stepping forward. More serious and "public" conflicts can stop current members from becoming more active, stop new members from joining, and damage the reputation of the organization in the eyes of fisheries agencies, other conservation or fishing group leaders or elected officials.

So, don't wait for conflict to arrive. Review TU's document, "[Keeping the Peace: Effectively Managing Conflict in Your Chapter or Council](#)," which was developed to help volunteer leaders reduce the likelihood that unproductive conflict will occur within their TU chapter or council and, when it does occur, to manage it effectively. Use this document and handy checklist as the basis for a board discussion about managing conflict. Prepare your chapter or council now so you can keep the peace and stay focused on saving fish and having fun.



TU Chapter & Council Manual

July 2023

Sample Chapter or Council Board Member Contract

The following is a sample chapter board contract designed for chapter boards to cater and adopt. It can easily be made applicable to the council context. The contract, or something similar, helps to ensure that expectations of leadership are consistently shared among your board. This is not a requirement for chapters or councils, just a recommendation. If you adopt a board member contract for your chapter or council, consider amending it to make it relevant and applicable for your local chapter or council.

CHAPTER NAME HERE Board Member Contract

I, _____ (NAME) _____, understand that as a member of the Board of Directors of the CHAPTER NAME, I have a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure the organization does the best work possible. I believe in the purpose and the mission of the organization, and will act responsibly and prudently as its steward.

As part of my responsibilities as a board member:

1. I will interpret the organization's work and values to the community and represent the organization.
2. I will attend as many board meetings, committee meetings and special events as possible.
3. I will make an annual personal financial contribution at a level that is meaningful to me.
4. I will actively participate in one or more fundraising activities annually.
5. I will act in the best interests of the organization and recuse myself from discussions and votes where I have a conflict of interest.
6. I will stay informed about what is going on in the organization. I will ask questions and request information.
7. I will prepare for meetings in advance and actively participate in policy setting discussions.
8. I will participate in and take responsibility for making decisions on issues, policies and other board matters.
9. I will work in good faith with staff and other board members as partners.
10. I understand that I am encouraged to serve actively on at least one committee, to solicit new members, and to engage our current membership.
11. If I do not fulfill these commitments to the organization, I will expect the chapter president to call me and discuss my responsibilities with me.
12. I agree to keep all Executive Session matters confidential.

In turn, the chapter will be responsible to me in several ways:

1. I will be provided monthly financial updates, annual budget reviews and an organizational activity update that allow me to meet the "prudent person" standards of the law.
2. Opportunities will be offered to me to discuss with the chapter president the organization's programs, goals, activities and status; additionally, I can request such opportunities.
3. The organization will help me perform my duties by keeping me informed about issues with which we are involved.
4. Board members will respond in a straightforward fashion to questions that I feel are necessary to carry out my fiscal, legal and moral responsibilities to this organization. Board members will work in good faith with me towards achievement of our goals.
5. If the organization does not fulfill its commitments to me, I can call on the chapter president to discuss the organization's responsibilities to me.

Date: _____ (Valid through official Board Terms.)

I fully understand that I will lose my Board position and privileges if I fail to fulfill any portion of this Board Contract.

Signed:

Member, CHAPTER NAME HERE Board of Directors

The Chapter Rechartering Process

Councils track their chapters' progress using their own set of rechartering criteria with which to recommend a chapter for recharter to TU national. Council recommendations are compiled by [Volunteer Operations staff](#) for the NLC and the Board of Trustees to approve every four years.

For chapters that are showing measurable progress in effectiveness or a sustained high level of effectiveness, councils recommend rechartering. For chapters that are struggling, councils help them develop a reasonable plan for increasing their effectiveness and assist with carrying out that plan.

Councils monitor chapter progress in conjunction with the chapter. If progress is made (as determined by the council) then councils recommend rechartering. If progress is not being made, then councils recommend dechartering and, upon the BOT's approval of the recommendation, the chapter's members will be reassigned to active chapters.

When a council deems a chapter ready for decharter, the council should first contact the members of the chapter, alerting them of the decision and giving these members an option to choose another chapter or let them know in which active chapter they will automatically be moved.

Every chapter must be recommended for rechartering (or dechartering) every four years.

Cash Management and Internal Controls

Budgeting should be at the top of the list of important tasks of every chapter and council leader. An active chapter or council can raise and spend a significant amount of money, and effective budgeting allows the chapter or council to make the most of its income and enjoy greater success with less pain. Newsletters, conservation projects, administration, etc... will need funding, and the budgeting process helps leaders plan and prioritize activities each year. Budgeting and policy decisions go hand-in-hand. While the budgeting process may vary from chapter to chapter and state to state, there are simple fundamentals to successful budgeting:

- ◇ Maintain current and precise financial records for both income and expenses. Historical income and expenses are the best guide to projecting future finances. Without a true record of the past, estimates into the future lose the precision required to lessen financial anxieties for your chapter.
- ◇ Make conservative estimates. When estimating emergency expenses or future income, overly optimistic projections for either can be financially dangerous.
- ◇ Develop an annual budget with both projected income and projected expenses.
- ◇ Use the budget as a management tool. By periodically (e.g., quarterly) tracking "actual" expenses and income against the projected numbers, chapters can plan accordingly.
- ◇ Provide continuity in financial and budgeting matters. The outgoing treasurer has worked with the budget a few times and has a grasp of overall revenue and expenses. It is helpful to plan ahead and train the incoming treasurer. Officers with experience in budgeting (among other activities) should try to recruit the next treasurer and include him or her in the budgeting experience.

The simplest method of developing your chapter or council's first budget is to use the outline of the Annual Activity Report you are required to submit between April 1 and May 15 every year. This report includes all the common areas of revenue and expenditures used by TU chapters and councils. The Annual Activity Report in the Leaders Only Tools section allows you to view and print your chapter's submission from previous years. Looking at previous reports gives you a good place to start for future budgeting. More resources are found in the Tacklebox.

Chapter volunteers work hard to raise funds for conservation and related purposes, and one of the most important responsibilities of chapter officers is to safeguard and protect those funds so they are used for the purposes for which they were raised. A few simple steps can safeguard those funds and other chapter assets. In 2015 the Board of Trustees adopted the [TU Policy on Financial and Property Controls for Chapters and Councils](#). All chapter and council officers and board members must become familiar with this policy. It is discussed in Chapter 8: Safeguarding Chapter and Council Assets.

Volunteer Leader Position Descriptions

A comprehensive list of position descriptions for many officer and director roles at both the chapter and council level is available in the [online Tacklebox](#). Included in those resources are sample chapter or council committee descriptions as well. The following list is a quick overview of some of the most common positions in a TU chapter or councils.

It is important to note that all TU volunteer leaders must be active TU members.

Chapter President

The TU chapter president sustains the work of the chapter by providing governance, leadership and strategic direction. The president is expected to review, understand and facilitate the organization's bylaws, policies and procedures, financial and legal situation, and strategic plan. As the board ambassador, the president acts as a spokesperson to the larger community. By modeling appropriate behavior, the president sets high standards for board conduct and intervenes if conflicts arise. Anyone taking on this role should have demonstrated community leadership, feel comfortable delegating, have good group dynamics skills and have the ability to communicate well including listen and seek input from others ([full customizable position description](#)).

A sampling of responsibilities includes:

- ◇ Plan, preside over, and facilitate board and executive committee meetings to ensure all legal and fiduciary responsibilities are met.
- ◇ Develop, approve, implement and evaluate the chapter's budget and [strategic plan](#).
- ◇ Represent the chapter on the state council, attending regular council meetings.
- ◇ Periodically consult with board members on their roles, help them assess their performance, and plan for leadership development and succession.
- ◇ Mentor and train your chapter vice president to facilitate a smooth transition for the incoming president.

Chapter Vice President

The vice president of a TU chapter is second in command. The position of vice president is often training to be a presidential candidate ([full customizable position description](#)). The vice president should be sure to read the description of chapter president.

A sampling of responsibilities includes:

- ◇ Preside over meetings from which the president is absent.
- ◇ Provide support and assistance to the president in order to achieve the core functions of the chapter.
- ◇ Perform duties as assigned by the president or the Board of Directors.

Chapter Secretary

The secretary performs a variety of tasks aimed at managing the records and administrative functions of the chapter. The role has wide-ranging responsibilities as an active conduit for communication to members and other stakeholders by giving proper notice of upcoming meetings and timely distribution of materials such as agendas and meeting minutes. Additionally, the secretary should be knowledgeable of and provide advice and resources to the board on topics such as governance issues, state laws/ reporting requirements, and risk management that will assist in fulfilling chapter fiduciary duties ([full customizable position description](#)).

A sampling of responsibilities includes:

- ◇ Distribute an agenda for each board meeting with associated reading materials well in advance.
- ◇ Retain records including board and committee rosters, bylaws, strategic plan, agendas and minutes.
- ◇ Keep the chapter leadership roster up to date in the Leaders Only Section online
- ◇ Assume responsibilities of the president in the absence of the president and vice president.
- ◇ Understand TU's [risk management](#) and insurance limitations and ensure the chapter is compliant.
- ◇ Ensure the proper controls are in place such as a [document retention](#), [conflict of interest](#) and [whistle blower](#).

Chapter Treasurer

The role of a treasurer is one of the most important in the chapter. It is critical that the chapter treasurer be conscientious and have good systems in place to maintain local or state filing requirements and maintain fiduciary integrity; otherwise the chapter is at serious risk ([full customizable position description](#)).

A sampling of responsibilities includes:

- ◇ Read and become familiar with the [Policy on Financial and Property Controls](#) and TU's [risk management and insurance](#) limitations to work with the Executive Committee to ensure the chapter is compliant.
- ◇ Ensure the Annual Activity Report is filed in the Leaders Only Tools section between April 1 and May 15.
- ◇ If your chapter has gross receipts of \$50,000 or less (over a three year average) TU will use the data from this form to file your IRS required 990N for you.
- ◇ If your chapter has gross receipts of \$50,000 or more (over a three-year average) you will need to file your own chapter/ council 990 or 990EZ by Aug. 15 of each year.
- ◇ Ensure chapter Annual Activity Report and Form 990 has been shared with the entire board.
- ◇ Ensure donations to your chapter are [properly acknowledged](#).

Chapter Membership Coordinator

Many chapters appoint a membership coordinator whose duties include tracking chapter membership, welcoming and engaging new members and encouraging existing members to renew or update their membership. Beyond tracking these statistics, the membership coordinator takes the lead on programs to recruit new members ([full customizable position description](#)).

A sampling of responsibilities includes:

- ◇ Report on the status of chapter membership at each board meeting including total membership, change from last meeting, new members, annual membership trends, etc.
- ◇ Coordinate new member recruitment via <http://www.tu.org/intro> - an online membership application for new members only - and increase chapter rebates for recruiting new members. Full details on new member recruitment and rebates in the [Membership Memo](#).
- ◇ Welcome new members to the chapter by letter, e-mail or phone, and encourage their active involvement in chapter events and activities.
- ◇ Organize a "greeter" at the entrance of all chapter meetings and events to ensure no guest arrives without being greeted, provided a nametag, welcomed and encouraged to participate fully in the chapter community.
- ◇ Remind and encourage suspended and expired members to renew.

Other Committee Coordinators

Because the officers listed above are often busy keeping the chapter running, it is usually a good practice to appoint other standing committees and committee coordinators. Some additional committees that many TU chapters find useful are: [nominating](#), [advocacy](#), [conservation](#), [youth education](#), [TU service partnership](#), [diversity and inclusion](#), or [fundraising](#).

The duties of these committees will vary with the activities or priorities of the chapter.

The Tacklebox details sample position descriptions for many of these committee coordinators.

Council Chair

The council chair is the chief executive officer of the council, responsible for the general and active management of the business and affairs of the council, understanding the organization's bylaws, policies and procedures, financial and legal situation, and strategic plan. The chair works closely with the council treasurer for key financial reporting and controls for the council, including filing the Annual Financial Report each year, ensuring that state and local filing/ registration requirements are met, that the relevant IRS filings are complete, and that proper financial controls are in place. The chair should also ensure that all of the chapters in the state are in compliance with filing deadlines, risk management requirements, and are in good overall health.

The chair acts as a spokesperson for the chapters in the state and plays a very important role coordinating and collaborating with TU staff. The chair may be asked to arbitrate chapter or council-level conflicts ([full customizable position description](#)).

A sampling of responsibilities includes:

- ◇ Develop, approve, implement and evaluate the council's [strategic plan](#).
- ◇ Appoint committee chairs and serve ex officio on committees. Good council level committees might include executive, nominating, conservation, advocacy, fundraising, communications, and diversity and inclusion.
- ◇ Assist the nominating committee in recruiting council leadership and aid in new council leader orientations. Mentor and train your council vice president.
- ◇ Provide assistance and support to chapter leadership.
- ◇ Facilitate state-level communications, conservation and advocacy efforts to represent members in the state.

Council Vice Chair

The vice chair of a council is second in command at the council level. The vice chair helps the council chair guide the council in fulfilling its stated and chartered roles. In cooperation with the council chair, the vice chair supports and implements measures to ensure that the council's time and resources are invested wisely, and in a manner that will ensure the current and future health of the council. Often the vice chair position is training to become a council chair candidate ([full customizable position description](#)).

A sampling of responsibilities includes:

- ◇ Preside over meetings from which the chair is absent.
- ◇ Provide support and assistance to the chair in order to achieve the core functions of the council.
- ◇ Perform duties as assigned by the chair or the council Executive Committee.

Council Secretary

The secretary performs a variety of tasks aimed at managing the records and administrative functions of the council. The role has wide-ranging responsibilities as an active conduit for communication to members and other stakeholders by giving proper notice of upcoming meetings and timely distribution of materials such as agendas and meeting minutes ([full customizable position description](#)).

A sampling of responsibilities includes:

- ◇ In conjunction with the executive committee, prepare an agenda for each board meeting and distribute it to the board, with associated reading materials, well in advance of the meeting.
- ◇ Retain records including board and committee rosters, bylaws, strategic plan, agendas and minutes.
- ◇ Assume responsibilities of the chair in the absence of the chair and vice chair.
- ◇ With the council executive committee, become familiar with and understand TU's [risk management](#) and [insurance limitations](#) and ensure the council is compliant.
- ◇ Ensure that your council officers have [reviewed the code of ethics](#) and the have the proper controls in place such as a [document retention policy](#), [conflict of interest form](#) and [whistle blower policy](#).



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Council Treasurer

The role of a treasurer is one of the most important in the council. It is critical that the council treasurer be conscientious and have good systems in place to maintain local or state filing requirements and maintain fiduciary integrity; otherwise the council is at serious risk. Providing chapter treasurer support and guidance will help ensure the same integrity ([full customizable position description](#)).

A sampling of responsibilities includes:

- ◇ The council treasurer must read and become familiar with the [Policy on Financial and Property Controls](#) and TU's [risk management](#) and [insurance limitations](#) to work with the Executive Committee to ensure the chapter is compliant – from the limitations of our 501c3 to liquor liability.
- ◇ Ensure the chapter Annual Activity Report is filed in the Leaders Only Tools section of tu.org between April 1 and May 15.
- ◇ If your council has gross receipts of \$50,000 or less (over a three year average) TU will use the data from this form to file your IRS required 990N for you.
- ◇ If your council has gross receipts of \$50,000 or more (over a three-year average) you will need to file your own chapter/ council 990 or 990EZ by Aug. 15 of each year.
- ◇ Ensure that you have shared the Annual Activity Report and Form 990 with your entire council board prior to submitting them as final.
- ◇ Ensure donations to your council are [properly acknowledged](#).

National Leadership Council (NLC) Representative

To be eligible to serve as an [NLC Representative](#) or officer, an individual must have served in a statewide TU office or a chapter leadership position and must be familiar with coldwater resource and TU organizational issues. NLC Representatives should also have the following qualifications: knowledge of coldwater fisheries issues of concern to their state; knowledge of their state's council and chapter organizational needs and concerns; proven communication skills; the ability to work effectively with staff and volunteer components of TU; and experience in implementing, directing, or organizing conservation efforts.

Each NLC Representative shall be responsible for representing his or her state on the NLC and acting as a liaison between the NLC and his or her state and for communicating with the council, chapters and members in his or her state on issues of national concern to TU and on the proceedings of the NLC. Each NLC Representative shall also coordinate with his or her state council and the NLC on implementation of the [National Conservation Agenda](#) and the NLC's organizational development efforts.

[Read the full NLC Representative Manual.](#)

Regional Vice President

If you have a large council with many chapters, it may be difficult to manage efficiently with only the structure described above. Large councils sometimes divide their state into regions comprised of chapters with geographic proximity and a community of interests. Regional vice presidents (RVPs) are elected or appointed by the chapters in each area to provide advice, support and generally coordinate the activities of chapters in that region. The primary goals of an RVP structure are to promote and enhance communication and representation for the chapters in each region of the state. An RVP should regularly attend meetings of the chapters in their area, assist chapter officers with chapter management issues and be a liaison, both up and down, between the council and its chapters. Day-to-day operational or administrative problems of the chapters are best resolved at the regional level with help from the RVP.

Other Committee Coordinators

Because the officers listed above are often busy keeping the council running, it is usually a good practice to appoint other standing committees and committee coordinators. Some additional committees that many TU councils find useful are: [nominating](#), [advocacy](#), [conservation](#), [youth education](#), [TU service partnership](#), [diversity and inclusion](#), or [fundraising](#) or [chapter development](#). The duties of these committees will vary with the activities or priorities of the council.

Chapter 7: Chapter & Council Fundraising

Each year, our chapters and councils across the country raise and spend more than \$10 million delivering our conservation mission on their home waters. It's an unrivaled grassroots ground game and driven by a strong strategy, effective planning, and a dedicated group of volunteers willing to roll up their sleeves and approach the important fundraising work, including growing and building their skills as fundraisers.

A strategic approach to funding is critical to sustainability. There are three sources of funding for all the nonprofits in the United States: earned income (such as products and fees for service), government (public sector), and the private sector, which includes foundations, corporations and individuals. For the 60 years that records about who gives money away have been kept, at least 80 percent of this money has been shown to be given by individuals.

One of the best ways to outline a strategic fundraising plan is to work backwards: if the implementation of your strategic plan will cost \$x over five years, determine what it's going to take to get there. Then develop a fundraising plan which relies on a diversity of revenue-generating tactics.

Fundraising Events

Most chapters and councils derive the majority of their funding from fundraising events - including significant growth in recent years in the use of online fundraising tools and activities.

Before starting to raise funds, be sure you have a clear and shared vision for why you are doing so, how the money will be spent and what other goals you might establish to measure the success of your event.

While an annual fundraising banquet is still the primary way that most chapters and councils raise funds and is an important part of most chapter's fundraising event strategy, during the Covid-19 pandemic and as it receded, the chapters and councils that thrived did so by adapting new technologies and digital fundraising methods.

Banquets can take quite a bit of work, and require a team approach to run successfully, but if everyone on the team is pulling together, the planning is made easier and the work spread equally.

Our [Banquet Guide & Planner](#) is a great resource to get started and walks you and your team through a 12-week plan for hosting a successful banquet. Everything from logistics to communications, prize solicitation and raffle opportunities are covered.

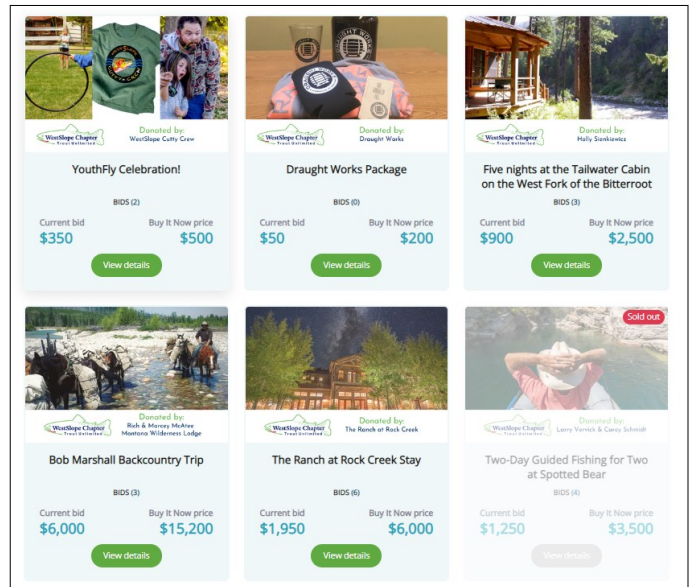
Once you've read through the guide, check out the [TU Fundraising Discount Program](#) and then reach out to your [Volunteer Operations staff](#) to talk through how to make your banquet a success.

Digital Fundraising

TU's new [Digital Fundraising tools](#), powered by our partners at Eventgroove were launched in 2020 as chapters and councils sought safe and socially distant ways to raise funds. Offering a wide array of fundraising types - from online auctions to sweepstakes, crowdfunding and chapter stores to well-designed donation pages - these tools are fast to setup, easy to use and proven to be successful.

Mobile-friendly and designed to help reach new audiences with easy social media sharing and more, the tools will have you raising funds from new donors in no time at all.

Even better, the tools are constantly updated and upgraded to stay on the cutting edge and your volunteers will have one-on-one support from Eventgroove staff and your [Volunteer Operations staff](#) to setup and run a digital fundraiser.



Online fundraisers—such as live auctions using the new TU Digital Fundraising tools from Eventgroove—have helped chapters and councils reach all new audiences and donors who might not attend an in-person banquet or other fundraising event.



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Embrace A Stream

Does your chapter or council have a conservation or education project that needs funding? Did you know that each year TU provides approximately \$100,000 in grants to local chapter/ council projects through its [Embrace A Stream \(EAS\) program](#)? Anywhere from two-dozen to as many as 50 projects are chosen each year ranging from efforts to replant a streambank to work to build in-stream habitat for trout or activities to educate and engage youth in our mission.

Since 1975, EAS has funded more than 1,200 projects totaling more than \$4.8 million in direct cash grants. Local TU chapters and councils contributed an additional \$13 million in cash and in-kind services to EAS funded projects, for a total investment of more than \$17 million.

Your chapter or council's next conservation or education project could get a big boost from an EAS grant. Even if you have never applied for a grant before, you shouldn't be intimidated by the process – our staff and volunteer committee are available to you as resources to call on for support, guidance and help in crafting your grant proposal.

Individuals

Most charitable giving in the U.S. comes from individuals and soliciting individual donors - whether to attend an event, bid on an online auction, or simply write a donation check - is the primary way chapters and councils raise much-needed funds.

People will not think to give you money unless you make your chapter or council needs known and actively and effectively promote the impact of their donations on your mission.

If your chapter or council is doing good work, then you deserve to raise the money to do it. What you must do is figure out how to articulate what you are doing so that the person hearing it, if they share your values, will want to donate above and beyond their TU dues to support your local efforts.

Of course, no one is obligated to support your chapter or council, so from time to time you should expect to hear “no.”

Once you receive money, you must thank the person who gave it to you. Thank-you notes do not need to be fancy and should not be long. While digital thank you messages and automated emails are efficient, if at all possible, and especially for larger gifts, a personal note, or hand-written card is best. Many chapters and councils [print thank you notecards](#) to use when writing “thank yous.”

If you do not have time to properly thank donors, you do not have time to solicit donors.

While thanking all donors is a best practice, written acknowledgment is required by the IRS to substantiate a charitable contribution of \$250 or more. For more information on IRS requirements in acknowledgment letters, download our [sample donor letter](#) and view the [IRS Compliance Guide for Nonprofits](#).

Individuals may choose to donate to your chapter in different ways. A check, a credit card payment via a secure online platform, cash or possibly even a gift of stock. Your chapter or council can work with TU national staff to [have the stock gift processed by TU headquarters](#) and the cash value transferred to your chapter. For more information about giving options, contact TU [Volunteer Operations staff](#).

Grants from State, Federal and Foundation Sources

TU has more than 420 chapters and councils, and we are always expanding our influence into new watersheds. Because of this, we need to be mindful in our coordination efforts, particularly when it comes to fundraising through grant applications to foundations, state agencies and federal programs. For example, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has specifically requested that all grant proposals from TU's chapters and councils be coordinated through TU staff.

For chapters and councils that are developing larger projects and considering applying for grants from NFWF or other federal programs, coordinating with TU staff is also a great way to improve the strength of your application and increase your chance of getting the grant. Our [“One TU” Guidelines for Federal, State & Foundation Grants](#) is a comprehensive resource to help you assess your readiness to apply for more sophisticated grants.

Local Organization, Business & Corporate Giving

Local organizations and businesses often support TU projects and activities that take place in their communities. Chapters might try approaching banks, civic organizations like the Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs, teacher's associations, and fly shops.

As a general rule of thumb, chapters and councils are encouraged to solicit and build partnerships with local businesses, regional companies and community organizations within their watershed. When considering a request of a large national company, first contact your [Volunteer Operations staff](#) to discuss if there is already a national relationship. There may be a standard process already in place to request funding, or we can work together to identify an operating divisions in your community and approach the local divisions for support.

Many organizations also will provide donations of goods and services including equipment for stream restoration projects, paper and printing for chapter newsletters, computer equipment, technical and legal expertise, and advertising. When approaching local organizations, emphasize the broader benefits of your project, including, greater public involvement, outreach to school children, and economic benefits. Chapters and councils might also propose ways for involving employees and members of community organizations in the project.

For the donation of gear from national-level companies, please be sure to visit the [TU Fundraising Program](#) and contact [Volunteer Operations staff](#) first.



Partnering with local companies is a great way to fund a project on your home water. Consider adding an employee volunteer day to the program to get a project completed and meet potential new donors.

Earned Income

Many chapters and councils have seen fundraising success with their efforts earning income in different capacities. Some, for example, have raised significant revenue through the sales of license plates through their state DMVs. Other ideas include selling advertisements in printed or digital newsletters or the sales of T-shirts and hats.

There are additional, separate requirements for reporting what the [IRS may view as “unrelated business income.”](#) If a nonprofit’s gross proceeds from unrelated business income exceed \$1,000, that income must be reported to the IRS using Form 990T.

If your chapter or council conducts a revenue-generating business, and the gross revenue from that business exceeds \$1,000, you should consult with your chapter’s accountant regarding whether that revenue constitutes unrelated business income.

Membership Rebates

TU’s membership rebate program can be another strategy for raising local funds. There are two different types of rebates: new member recruitment rebates and year-end rebates, both of which are issued once a year to eligible chapters and councils by direct deposit in the summer, following the close of the fiscal year on March 31 and successful filing of the Annual Activity Report prior to the May 15 deadline.

New member recruitment rebates of at least \$15 per member recruited will be sent to chapters and the year-end rebates of \$2.50 per active, dues-paid member will be sent to council bank accounts. The rebates were designed to help councils pay for the costs of servicing their members, and for local chapters to invest in engagement activities to attract and grow our membership.

Recruiting new members online is easy using the special recruitment link www.tu.org/intro which offers a half-price membership to any recruited member who is new to TU. The [Membership Memo](#) provides full details on these programs as well as all the benefits of membership, using TU’s membership management tools and more.



Responsible Raffle Reminder

Raffles are important fundraising tools for chapters and councils, but it is also important to remember that there are often state and federal regulations surrounding their use.

Councils and chapters need to be aware of those issues to avoid legal problems.

Always check with your state's secretary of state and attorney general to make sure the raffle that your chapter or council is planning complies with state laws and with any applicable local laws. It is better to take the time to check your state's law before conducting a raffle than to run into problems later.

Chapters and councils are prohibited from selling raffle tickets to someone outside of your state either through the mail or over the internet. Doing so may violate federal law and the laws of several states.

The only approved way to conduct cross-border fundraisers is to use the Sweepstakes Tool provided as part of the TU Digital Fundraising platform. If you have a different tool you would like to use to run a sweepstakes or raffle, please contact your [Volunteer Operations staff](#) to ensure it complies with our internal rules and with federal gaming laws.

The Sales of Firearms

The raffling or sale of firearms at a TU event can be complex, challenging and even a risky prospect involving a Federal Firearms License dealer, various forms and fees, a NICS (and/or state) background check, a possibly waiting period, and more.

Before considering raffling or selling firearms at a TU function, chapters and councils are first required to consult with [Volunteer Operations staff](#).

Chapter 8: Safeguarding Chapter & Council Assets

Chapter and council volunteers work hard to raise funds for conservation and related purposes, and one of the most important responsibilities of chapter and council officers is to safeguard and protect those funds so they are used for the purposes for which they were raised.

A few simple steps can safeguard those funds and other chapter and council assets as well as reduce the reputational risk to the entire organization.

In 2015, the Board of Trustees adopted the [Policy on Financial and Property Controls for Chapters and Councils](#), and that policy sets out several requirements and recommendations, including:

- ◇ Monthly review of financial records by a board member who is not authorized to sign checks.
- ◇ A written inventory of all property in excess of \$200 in value.
- ◇ Not knowingly electing to a chapter and council or council office a person who has been convicted of a crime involving fraud, dishonesty or financial impropriety or who is a registered sex offender.
- ◇ Recommendations for setting term limits for officers, especially treasurers; dual signatures on checks over \$1,000; and best practices for the use of debit and credit cards.

Financial Reviewer

The best check against the temptation for financial fraud is for more than one chapter and council officer to review monthly each of the chapter and council's bank-account records (including the records of any debit/credit card or electronic-banking transactions.) Therefore, chapters and councils must provide access to the records of all accounts to one chapter and council officer who is not authorized to sign checks, otherwise withdraw funds from the accounts, or make charges on a chapter and council credit card. That officer could be an assistant treasurer whose sole function is to review the accounts, or it could be an existing officer. That access may be electronic through the relevant financial institution and credit-card company or through hard copies of bank and credit-card statements, but the records reviewed must show the date, amount, and payee of the transactions. Electronic access must not be of the type that gives the reviewing officer the power to withdraw or transfer funds from the chapter's and council's account. If hard copies of bank or credit-card statements are used, they must be mailed directly from the financial institution or credit-card company to the officer charged with reviewing the records, who can then forward the statements, after review, to the treasurer. The chapter and council officer charged with reviewing the records of the chapter and council accounts and credit cards must review those records at least monthly and must report any inappropriate checks, debits, or charges to the chapter and council's board of directors.

Personal Property Inventory

Each chapter and council must prepare and keep a current written inventory of all personal property in excess of \$200 in value that the chapter and council owns and must appoint an officer to oversee that property. This will help assure that the chapter and council is aware of the property that it owns, so that property can be properly used. A sample inventory listing spreadsheet and electronic storage space is available for chapter and councils and councils to use in the Leaders Only Tools section of tu.org.

Accounting for Restricted Donations

Chapter and councils and councils must assure that money or other assets donated for a particular purpose are used only for that purpose. It is improper, for example, to raise money for work on a particular river and then to use the money for a different purpose without the expressed approval of the persons or organizations that donated the money.



Term Limits

The establishment and enforcement of term limits for chapter and council officers are hallmarks of a strong chapter and council and help assure the financial integrity of the chapter and council. Chapter and council leaders should make developing new leaders a priority. While the recruitment of members to serve as treasurers can be difficult at times, the rotation of the office of treasurer inspires confidence on the part of the members in the continued accuracy of chapter and council finances.

Check Signing Authority

It is strongly encouraged that chapter and councils require that two chapter and council officers sign any check (typically over a \$1,000 threshold) if a dual-signature requirement is permitted by the chapter and council's financial institution. Adopting a dual-signature practice will require a written board resolution that is filed with the chapter and council's financial institution, so that the financial institution will both know of the requirement and can be held responsible for cashing checks without the proper signatures.

Debit Cards

Chapter and councils should use debit cards and electronic banking with caution. Debit cards and electronic banking do not contain limits on the amounts that may be debited from the account, and significant funds can be removed from the account without the notice of even vigilant chapter and council officers. Unlike with a credit card, if an unauthorized transaction is made with a debit card or through electronic banking, the burden is on the chapter and council to prove that the transaction was unauthorized, and the amount of the transaction is frozen while the transaction is under review. Bank statements do not routinely contain detailed information concerning debit-card transactions, such as the payee of the transaction, information that is critical to determining the appropriateness of the transaction. If a chapter and council elect to use debit cards or electronic banking, the chapter and council officers must be extra vigilant. It is strongly recommended that chapter and councils which use these banking practices establish banking relationships with banks that will send instantaneous text or e-mail messages of each transaction to designated chapter and council officers.

Credit Cards

Credit cards can be useful tools for chapter and council financial practices, but they must also be used with caution. Chapter and councils must pay off the amount charged on the cards each month, so that they do not incur debt that cannot be readily re-paid. In addition, chapter and councils must set reasonable limits on the amount of credit available through the cards. It is strongly suggested that, for most chapter and councils, the available credit be capped at no more than \$5,000. Unlike debit cards, fraudulent credit-card transactions can be reversed more quickly without freezing chapter and council assets for prolonged periods of time.

Reporting Violations

If a chapter and council discover or suspect that money or other chapter and council property has been stolen, has been used for unauthorized purposes, or has been used for a purpose inconsistent with TU's purpose, the chapter and council must immediately report that incident to TU's Vice President for Volunteer Operations.

Chapter 9: Liability & Risk Management

The goals of this chapter are to help TU chapters and councils increase their awareness of risks, the importance of incorporating the concept of risk management into their planning efforts, and their general understanding of TU's insurance policies. Because every situation is different (due to location, audience, activity, season, etc...) chapters and councils are strongly encouraged to contact [Volunteer Operations staff](#) with any and all questions regarding insurance or liability issues. Additional [information on TU's insurance and on risk management](#) can be found in the online Tacklebox, and we urge council and chapter leaders to become familiar with those materials.

It is impossible for any organization that does good things to completely avoid risk. However, if all of us involved with TU -- from the Board of Trustees to the staff to our local chapter leaders -- focus on the risks involved with the TU activities they are involved with and try to manage those risks, the work we do will be better, we will have broader public support, and we will minimize the chances of TU facing liabilities that could sap our financial resources and undermine our conservation efforts.

The first step in managing risk is understanding what risks your chapter or council may face on any planned project. Once your chapter or council understands those risks, it needs to analyze whether it is capable of managing them, that is, it needs to make sure that it has the resources to eliminate or minimize those risks. If it is not sure it is capable of handling the risks involved in any project, it should seek help from [Volunteer Operations staff](#).

Passing on the Risk

In many circumstances, a chapter or council can pass the risk of an activity on to others who are better equipped to handle the risk. As discussed below, a council or chapter can pass on risk, for example, by having a licensed and insured caterer serve alcoholic beverages at events, by having insured outfitters provide and handle boats at boating events, by having insured and licensed engineers and contractors handle projects requiring professional skill, and by having parties other than the chapter or council contract with engineers, contractors, and landowners.

If the risk cannot be passed to another entity, a council or chapter engaged in a project or an event must take reasonable steps to minimize risk. It can do that in several ways, including by following the policies and recommendations set out below.

Contractual Liability

TU chapters and councils routinely enter into contracts to further their conservation work. Many of those contracts, especially those involving stream-improvement or other construction work, have risks for the chapter or council involved and, in some instances, for the national organization, as well. The Legal/Risk Management Committee of the Board of Trustees has prepared a document, "[Contract Guidance for TU Chapters and Councils](#)," which requires that the following categories of chapter and council contracts be submitted in draft form to [Volunteer Operations staff](#) for review. All of these categories of contracts involve potentially serious risks for the chapter or council involved.

- ◇ Any proposed contract under which a chapter or council agrees to indemnify anyone unless the proposed indemnification language limits the indemnification obligations to the acts and omissions of the chapter or council that are covered by TU's insurance.
- ◇ Any proposed contract involving the removal or repair of any dam, any work on abandoned mines, and any work on possibly polluted sites.
- ◇ Any proposed contract with a federal agency when the amount of the contract is \$100,000 or more.
- ◇ Any proposed contract with a state agency.
- ◇ Any proposed contract involving a public road or highway or involving a railroad right of way.

[Volunteer Operations staff](#) may exempt from this review process proposed contracts of chapters and councils that have established their own appropriate legal review of contracts and that follow the guidance for contracts established by the Legal/Risk Management Committee. For contracts involving uninsured or excessive risk, the Board of Trustees has established a process for review involving senior staff and members of the Legal/ Risk Management Committee.



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Agreements under which a chapters or council agrees to indemnify or hold harmless another party are particularly fraught with risk. As indicated above, any proposed agreement under which a chapter or council agrees to indemnify or hold harmless another party must be reviewed and approved by national staff unless the proposed indemnification language limits the indemnification obligations to the acts and omissions of the chapter or council that are covered by TU's insurance. If a chapter or council does enter into an indemnification agreement that goes beyond the coverage provided by TU's insurance policies, then any liability under that agreement is solely that of the council or chapter. Chapters and councils should always avoid agreeing to pay attorney fees, expenses or costs for another organization in connection with TU activities.

In many cases TU chapters and councils sign memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with a variety of partners. MOUs can be helpful to the extent that they set out clearly the obligations of the parties to the document and thus can help to avoid problems down the road about what each party's obligations are. Chapters and councils should be aware, however, that MOUs are binding contracts that impose enforceable obligations on the parties. Hence, they must be entered into carefully, and chapters and councils should only take on obligations that they are sure they can fulfill. Of particular importance is any provision of an MOU that addressed ownership of funds raised by the TU Chapter in the joint effort. TU's document entitled "[Contract Guidance for Trout Unlimited Chapters and Councils](#)," referred to above, contains more detailed information on how chapters and councils should address contracts and MOUs. If you have any questions about proposed MOUs or would like to know whether such a national-level MOU template is available for the partnership your chapter/council is exploring, please contact [Volunteer Operations staff](#). To the extent that a proposed MOU seeks to have TU, a chapter or a council indemnify or hold another organization harmless, please see the question and answer on indemnification, above.

Proper drafting and negotiation are essential to avoid the common pitfalls of contractual liability. [Volunteer Operations staff](#) will be happy to review any proposed contract, but a draft of the proposed contract is required. To facilitate the process and avoid unnecessary risks, chapters and councils seeking national staff review of proposed contracts should submit a draft of the contract at least 14 days before the date of scheduled execution.

In addition to the above, for their own protection, chapters and councils should require committee and/or chapter board approval before contracts are signed or other commitments made that involve large sums of money or long periods of time. Be aware, however, that in most cases an outside company or person is entitled to rely on the "apparent authority" of an officer of a corporation or organization. Therefore, the lack of chapter board approval will generally not invalidate a contract or commitment signed by an officer of the chapter.

In addition, many kinds of contracts are enforceable even if they are not put into writing. Always use written contracts, so the responsibilities of the parties are clearly set out.

Real Property Issues

While the Board of Trustees strongly encourages TU at every level to work to protect land and access to land for conservation and fishing, TU is not set up to own or manage interests in real property or manage and enforce conservation easements. These types of arrangements raise significant risk for chapters, councils and for the whole organization.

As a result, TU's Board of Trustees has adopted several policies governing the acquisition by any part of TU, including chapters and councils, of interests in real property, access rights and conservation easements.

[Trout Unlimited Policy on the Ownership of Interests in Real Property:](#)

This policy establishes a process for TU to follow if the national staff or a chapter or council wants to retain or acquire an interest in real property. The policy also addresses a process for the review and approval of office-space leases.

[Trout Unlimited Policy on the Ownership of Access Rights for the Purpose of Recreational Fishing:](#)

This policy establishes a process for all of TU to follow when acquiring, by agreement, access to privately held property for the purpose of recreational fishing. Some of these proposed agreements require the approval of the national staff.

[Resolution Concerning the Prohibition of Holding Interests in Conservation Easements:](#)

This Board resolution reaffirms the Board's policy that no part of TU should own interests in conservation easements.

[Trout Unlimited General Policy and Guidelines for the Acceptance of Charitable Contributions:](#)

While TU at every level welcomes gifts and contributions, some of those gifts, such as gifts of real property and closely held securities, can present liability issues. This policy identifies gifts that require staff review before being accepted.

Liquor Liability

From time to time, chapters and councils desire to have alcoholic beverages supplied at TU sponsored events. This can take several forms, depending upon who furnishes the beverages, who serves the beverages and who charges for the beverages. TU recognizes that alcoholic beverages can be enjoyed responsibly, but the serving of alcohol at any TU event involves risks not only for your chapter, council, and volunteer leaders, but also for anyone who could be injured by someone who consumes too much alcohol at the event. Chapter and council leaders should be particularly aware of the risks involved with serving alcohol and should take steps to avoid or minimize those risks. This section of the Leadership Manual discusses the best ways to reduce those risks.

The best way to avoid the risks involved with alcohol is not to allow alcohol at events that are not purely social events. Alcohol has no place at youth events (including camps), at teaching events, at events involving watercraft or wading, or at stream restoration and cleanup events, especially where potentially dangerous tools or equipment are used. Chapters and councils should prohibit anyone from using alcohol at such events and should strictly enforce that prohibition.

If your chapter or council wishes to have alcoholic beverages at purely social events, your chapter or council must use third-party professionals to sell and serve alcohol. Those third-party vendors must be licensed by state and local authorities to sell and serve alcohol and must have at least \$1,000,000 of liability insurance for that sale and service. Most social events take place at facilities that are licensed to serve alcohol, including hotels or restaurants. Licensed caterers can be retained for other social events. In short, chapters and councils must not sell or serve alcohol.

In addition, chapters and councils must not profit--either directly or indirectly--from the sale of alcohol. They must not, for example, agree with the vendor to receive a donation calculated on a percentage of the sales of alcohol at the event.

In addition, chapters and councils should:

- ◇ Assure that the licensed server will provide a trained bartender to measure drinks, assess the condition of the patrons, and stop serving anyone who has had enough to drink.
- ◇ Obtain a copy of the server's liquor license and liquor liability policy and make sure that policy has limits of at least \$1,000,000. Give [volunteer operations staff](#) a copy of the license and the liquor liability policy at least two weeks before the event.
- ◇ If possible, have TU, your chapter, your council, and your volunteers named as additional insureds on the licensed server's liquor liability policy. (This may be difficult, unless the event is large)
- ◇ Make sure (1) that the alcohol is served only during the first part of the event and the bar is closed when the meal, if any, starts or shortly thereafter, (2) that "tipsy taxis" or designated drivers are provided free of charge, and (3) that free non-alcoholic beverages are readily available.
- ◇ Limit drinks to beer and wine and control the number of drinks available through drink tickets provided as people enter the event.
- ◇ Even if the event does not involve a meal, make sure that food of some sort is served.
- ◇ Negotiate a rate for meals and facilities that is not based upon the amount of alcohol served and do not share, even indirectly, in the proceeds of alcohol sales by a licensed server.

While TU's insurance policies do provide coverage for liquor liability, that coverage is limited, and it is technical. Chapters and councils should not assume that they have coverage under that policy for their activities if those activities vary from the practices listed above without first checking with the [Volunteer Operations staff](#).

If for some reason your chapter or council is involved in planning an event at which it will charge (even indirectly) for alcohol, in which it will serve alcohol, in which the chapter or council will share (even indirectly) in the proceeds of the sale of alcohol, or in which your chapter or council is required to obtain a liquor license to serve or furnish alcohol, your chapter or council must contact [Volunteer Operations staff](#) well before the event is scheduled to occur.

Any chapter or council considering serving or furnishing alcohol at any event must check with its state and local authorities to determine if a license to serve or furnish alcohol is required for that event by state, county or local regulation.

Youth Camps and Other Youth Projects

It is vitally important that all of our youth programs have as their highest priority the safety and well-being of the children who participate in them. The programs should be carefully structured and carefully supervised to minimize the risks of physical danger and other harm.

Whenever adults work with children and youth, there is the risk of sexual abuse. Organizers of TU events involving children must structure those events to minimize the risk of sexual abuse. Events must be structured to avoid having one adult working with one child or one youth in an isolated setting. When working with or instructing children or youth on streams and rivers, volunteers and TU staff must work at least in pairs. Whenever possible, volunteer leaders and staff should limit events involving children and youth to one central area of a stream, pond, lake, recreation area or community center, so activities can be easily monitored.

TU requires that TU volunteers, TU employees, and other TU-retained staff pass a background check before they may participate in any TU-sponsored overnight camp involving children or youth. If your chapter or council is planning an overnight youth camp, please be sure to contact [Volunteer Operations staff](#). TU national covers the cost of the background checks.

In addition, Pennsylvania requires that volunteers working with children or youth (even if the work is not in a camp setting) pass background checks in some circumstances, and other states may have similar requirements. If you are uncertain what the requirements of your state are for programs in which adults, as volunteers or paid staff, work with children or youth, please contact [Volunteer Operations staff](#).

TU has adopted a [Sexual Abuse Policy](#) which is posted in the online Tacklebox on tu.org. Every volunteer, TU employee, or other TU-retained staff who will be involved with children or youth in a TU-sponsored event must read, sign and return the policy to TU's Youth Education Director before participating in the event. It's the responsibility of the person in charge of your council's or chapter's children or youth program to assure that every volunteer, TU employee, or other TU-retained staff has reviewed and signed the Sexual Abuse Policy.

Organizers of TU events involving children and youth need to keep in mind that children and youth cannot legally consent to participate in the event, cannot agree to waive any right they may have to pursue claims against the organizers of the event, and cannot consent to the use of photographs containing their image. Therefore, TU strongly recommends that TU national staff and each chapter and council sponsoring a project involving children or youth obtain [written liability waivers](#) from the parent or legal guardian of each child or youth who will be involved in the event. A form of such a waiver can be found in the online Tacklebox on tu.org. The requirements for a successful liability waiver differ from state to state, and TU urges the organizers of TU events involving children and youth to have a local lawyer review the waiver forms found in the Tacklebox and amend them as necessary to bring them into compliance with the particular state's law.

TU staff and volunteers who participate in programs that occur under the auspices of other organizations, such as schools and boys and girls clubs, do not need to obtain liability waivers for children participating in those programs. That would include programs such as Trout in the Classroom.

Children and youth, like adults, have a right to their privacy, and no one must use photographs, videos, or other depictions of a child's or youth's likeness without the express written permission of the child's or youth's parent or legal guardian. A [model release form](#) giving permission for TU, its chapters and its councils to use a photograph or video of an adult, a child, or a youth is found in the Tacklebox on tu.org. No child or youth should be prohibited from participating in a TU-sponsored event if his or her parent or guardian declines to sign the model release form.

If a parent or guardian of a child or youth declines to sign no pictures, videos or other likenesses of the child or youth may be used by anyone associated with the TU-sponsored event.



Structuring youth events properly is essential to protecting youth from harm as well as TU - and our volunteers - from issues arising due to allegations of misconduct or abuse.

Please remember that a child's or youth's contact information is to be used solely for chapter-related or council-related business and must be held in compliance with Trout Unlimited's [Privacy Policy](#). Youth member contact information should never be used for external purposes without the written consent of the child's parent or guardian.

TU's liability policy covers events involving children, subject to the limitations and exclusions of the policy. Councils and chapters have the option of [purchasing supplemental accident insurance](#), which covers physical injury to a participant in a TU event without regard to whether the injury was caused by anyone's fault.

Soliciting Funds from Minors

Minors are generally incapable as a matter of law to enter into contracts, and transactions involving minors may be voidable and are subject to various laws. As a result, TU, its chapters and councils, should not solicit funds from minors at youth events, and should not solicit funds from minors at non-youth event contests or raffles which involve firearms, liquor, trips, or other items which are generally not suitable for those under the age of 18 as prizes.

Stream Restoration Liability

Stream restoration projects taken on by chapters increasingly involve major modifications to stream channels, moving heavy materials such as boulders or trees, and the use of heavy equipment. If your chapter is involved in a stream restoration project, TU has experts on staff who can assist you with the technical, financial, and liability issues associated with such projects.

The "[Contract Guidance for Trout Unlimited Chapters and Councils](#)," document referred to above addresses in detail liability risks involved in stream restoration projects and how to minimize those risks. Set out below are also some basic things your chapter or council should do to minimize risks in such projects.

First, if your chapter or council is going to sign any major contracts in connection with the project, submit that draft contract to [volunteer operations staff](#) for review at least 14 days before signing.

Second, TU's primary method of controlling liability in connection with stream restoration projects is to ensure that engineers and contractors involved with the project have adequate insurance in the event of a problem. If you hire a contractor or engineer in connection with any project, TU's contract with that contractor or engineer should require the engineer or contractor to produce a certificate of insurance and to name TU (the national organization, the chapter, the council, and TU volunteers) as additional insureds on the engineer's or contractor's policy. This is standard industry practice and should not present a problem for most contractors and engineers.

Finally, TU does not have liability insurance for damage caused by pollution, so if a project involves the movement or removal of potentially toxic material (including sediments) or the removal of a dam (even a small dam), you must contact [volunteer operations staff](#) to ensure that TU is not being exposed to any uninsured risk. The engineers and contractors involved in a project can usually obtain pollution liability insurance for that project that will cover TU and the involved chapter, council, and TU volunteers as additional insureds, but the chapter or council (working with volunteer operations staff) should assure that the coverage is adequate for the risks of the project.



Even small dam removal projects not using heavy equipment will often involve contracts, permits, certificates of liability insurance and more. These activities need to have the risk management side of the project managed as closely and carefully as the work itself.

Boating Liability

Boating events present good opportunities to engage current or prospective members in TU's mission and to provide beneficial, on-the-water experiences for others. Boating events, however, present some risk of injury to the participants, and those events must be structured to minimize those risks. TU has prepared the following checklist for boating events sponsored by TU national, its chapters, and its councils. By complying with the items on this checklist for any boating event in which you are involved, you can help assure that your event will be safe. (The word "boats" as used here refers to any watercraft, including but not limited to float-tubes, kayaks, and canoes.)

To minimize risk of injury to the event participants, you must assure that:

- All boats used in the event and their operators will comply with all of the requirements of federal, state, and local law concerning boating safety, including requirements concerning the wearing of life jackets/personal flotation devices by each person onboard.
- Regardless of the requirements of boating law, each boat associated with the event will have on it:
 - ◇ A throw-able, rescue rope
 - ◇ A life jacket/personal flotation device for each person onboard
 - ◇ A spare oar (if a drift or row boat)
- No minors will be on a boat for the event. (If you have plans to include minors in your boating event, please contact the Vice President for Volunteer Operations well before the event.)
- The body of water on which the event will take place is a safe environment on which to operate boats. (Please contact the Vice President for Volunteer Operations well before the event if the event involves floating on Class 3 or more serious rapids.)
- Your boat operators know the water on which the boats will be used and know how to operate their boats competently on that water. (If excess risk is present, if inexperienced boat operators may be used, or if you have any other concern about the safety of the event, please contact the Vice President for Volunteer Operations well before the event.)
- No one associated with the event will use alcoholic beverages during the event.
- All boats associated with the event are less than 58 feet long.

To assure that TU's liability insurance will cover claims for any injuries that may occur related to the event, you must assure that no boats associated with the event will be used to carry people or property for a charge.

Please note that no part of TU should own any kind of boat. *(If your chapter or council owns a boat, please contact the Vice President for Volunteer Operations before you use it in the event.)*

In addition, to you must assure that:

- Only boats that are separately insured for liability by their owners will be used for the event and proof of that liability coverage has been provided to the event organizers. (We understand that this is not possible in every case, and if that is true for your event, please contact the Vice President for Volunteer Operations before proceeding with the event.)
- A liability waiver is signed by each participant that has been reviewed by a local attorney. (A [sample liability waiver](#) can be found in the [online Tacklebox](#), but the standards for effective liability waivers vary from state to state. Thus, the form below should be reviewed by a local attorney before your event.)
- A sheet describing in detail the physical activities that participants will be engaged in during the event is prepared and that that activities sheet is signed by each participant in the event.

If you have complied with the requirements of this checklist, you may proceed with organizing your TU-related boating event. We strongly encourage you to reach out to the Vice President for Volunteer Operations if you have any questions or concerns about the event.

Liability Waivers

TU strongly recommends that each chapter and council obtain [written liability waivers](#) from participants involved in any TU project. Waiver forms are available in the online Tacklebox, under Business Practices >> Risk Management. The requirements for a successful liability waiver differ from state to state, and TU urges councils and chapters to have a local lawyer review the waiver forms found in the Tacklebox and amend them as necessary to bring them into compliance with the particular state's law. A parent or legal guardian must sign the liability waiver for a child or youth (that is, anyone under 18 years of age) participating in a TU project.

When working on a cooperative project with the federal government, be sure to have all participants sign up as volunteer workers for that specific work, if that option is available. Then, should personal injury occur, the member would be covered under the federal workers compensation program.

Responsible Raffle Reminder

Raffles are important fundraising tools for chapters and councils, but it is also important to remember that there are often state and federal regulations surrounding their use.

Councils and chapters need to be aware of those issues to avoid legal problems.

Always check with your state's secretary of state and attorney general to make sure the raffle that your chapter or council is planning complies with state laws and with any applicable local laws. It is better to take the time to check your state's law before conducting a raffle than to run into problems later.

Chapters and councils are prohibited from selling raffle tickets to someone outside of your state either through the mail or over the internet or by email. Doing so may violate federal law and the [laws of several states](#). Instead, TU provides chapters and councils with a specially managed [online fundraising tool from Eventgroove](#) providing opportunities to run legal sweepstakes, online auctions, crowd funders, online stores and more.

The only approved way to conduct cross-border fundraisers is to use the Sweepstakes Tool provided as part of the [TU Digital Fundraising platform](#). If you have a different tool you would like to use to run a sweepstakes or raffle, please contact your [Volunteer Operations staff](#) to ensure it complies with our internal rules and with federal gaming laws.

Insurance Coverage

TU provides insurance coverage for chapters and councils and for their officers, directors, and volunteers. Below is a summary of the coverage provided. If you have any questions on the scope of that coverage, please [read the insurance FAQ in the online Tacklebox](#) and contact volunteer operations staff for more detailed questions.

Remember that insurance is the last line of defense for risks. Chapters and councils can prevent or minimize claims on TU's insurance by carefully planning their activities, by understanding the risks presented by their activities, by passing those risks on to others better equipped to bear them, and by minimizing the risks that cannot be passed on to others.

TU's Commercial General Liability Policy

TU's Commercial General Liability (CGL) policy provides liability coverage for the negligence of TU councils, chapters, and members engaged in activities on behalf of TU. Negligence (for the purpose of this document) generally means the carelessness, mistake, unintentional acts or omissions of a TU chapter, council, or member that result in damage to another person or entity. As an example, if a TU chapter engages in a work project and the negligent act of one member injures another person, the policy would cover the chapter, council, and negligent member against a claim by the injured party, subject to the terms of the policy.

In some circumstances, TU's CGL policy provides liability coverage for the negligence of persons who are not TU members but who are volunteering at a TU-sponsored event. There are several areas that TU's CGL policy does not cover, including professional negligence, such as engineering malpractice, and workers compensation insurance. *(TU national carries separate workers' compensation insurance for its employees only.)*

No chapter or council should undertake any project within 50 feet of a railroad right of way (whether or not the right of way is being used for railroad purposes) without first contacting volunteer operations staff.



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Proof of Insurance

Frequently, in connection with conservation projects, chapters and councils are asked by their partners to provide proof of TU's liability insurance. That proof is provided through a Certificate of Insurance, a standard document that indicates who is covered by TU's insurance policy. TU produces Certificates of Insurance for TU staff, chapters and councils only. A certificate includes, but is not limited to, the following information: chapter or council name; TU point of contact; event location; and telephone number. Outside partner groups are not covered by TU's insurance. If your chapter or council needs a Certificate of Insurance for an upcoming event, please fill out the [Insurance Request Form](#) in the Tacklebox at least two weeks prior to your event.

If your chapter or council is asked to add another organization or a business as an additional insured on TU's liability policy, your chapter or council should contact [volunteer operations staff](#). Only the insurance agent for TU's policies can add another organization or a business to TU's liability policy as an additional insured.

Supplemental Accident Insurance

TU offers supplemental accident insurance for chapters and councils that will provide up to \$50,000 of medical costs per participant per accident for all TU sponsored events, including youth camps, at an annual cost of \$126 per chapter or council. An option for higher limits of \$100,000 is available at an annual cost of \$155.

Each chapter and council must apply for this coverage itself. A council cannot, for example, apply for this insurance for all the chapters in its state. The chapter or council's completed application will be effective on the date the signed application and premium amount is received by the TU national office, and the policy will expire on March 31 of each year.

Policy coverage for the supplemental accident insurance includes:

- Medical expenses arising out of an accident: \$25,000 per participant per accident
- Dental expenses arising out of an accident: included in above limit
- Deductible: None
- Benefit period: 52 weeks
- Plan coverage: Full excess
- Accidental death benefit: \$15,000
- Accidental dismemberment benefit: \$25,000
- Accidental death & dismemberment aggregate: \$500,000 per accident

All members in good standing of the participating TU chapter or council, volunteers, guests, and youth participants in activities sponsored and supervised by a chapter or council that has purchased this insurance are covered by it.

Covered activities include: meetings, fly-fishing instruction, training, stream clean up and stream maintenance. Travel arranged or provided by the chapter or council is also included. Sponsored activities with duration of over seven days are not covered unless specifically agreed to by the insurer, but overnight youth camps with duration greater than seven days are covered. The policy is "full excess," which means that it will cover expenses not covered by injured person's own insurance.

To apply for this supplemental accident insurance, fill out the [online application form in the Tacklebox](#).

Risk Management

At www.tu.org/riskmanagement you will find information on how to reduce risk for your chapter and council, including FAQs on TU's insurance policy, sample liability waivers, a form to request a certificate of liability insurance and information on TU's supplemental accident insurance.

Chapter 10: Requirements Dictated by the Limitations of TU's 501(c)3 Status

As a federal exempt organization, TU's structure is somewhat unique in that each of our more than 420 chapters and councils operate under our group exemption, but also have their own EIN. This means that while each chapter operates as its own entity, with each board of directors held accountable for fiduciary and governance responsibility, any action which risks the nonprofit status of a single chapter can also potentially impact the status of the entire group.

Therefore, great care must be taken in ensuring your chapter or council is closely following the requirements dictated by the IRS. When in doubt, contact your [Volunteer Operations staff](#).

Filing of the Chapter and Council Annual Activity Report

The primary way our organization gauges chapter and council activity and tracks the overall financial standing of TU is to collect annual financial statements from each chapter and council. These statements are filed electronically and are available in the Leaders Only Tools Section of tu.org between April 1 and May 15, each year. The Annual Activity Report may be filed by: chapter president; chapter vice president; chapter treasurer; council chair; council vice chair; NLC representative; council treasurer. These leaders must be listed as such in the Leaders Only Tools section.

TU's fiscal year is from April 1 to March 31. Please be sure to file your financial report based on this fiscal year. Most chapters and councils will file on a cash basis. This means reporting activity based on your bank account or accounts. Accuracy and consistency are important as the numbers reported are reviewed for trends and used to determine reporting requirements. Even if your chapter has had no activity in the last year, submitting a financial statement is required.

Filing a financial report with the national office does not necessarily satisfy filing requirements for the IRS. TU national will file the Form 990N for most chapters, those that gross less than \$50,000 on a three year average. However, for those larger chapters/ councils that gross greater than \$50,000 on a three year average, TU national does not file Form 990 or 990EZs for these entities. See the following section for federal tax filing requirements.

Tax Exemption Restrictions

TU's 501(c)(3) status, or charitable status, is one of TU's most important assets. Among other things, this status allows donors to deduct their charitable contributions to your chapter or council, to the extent allowed by law. 501(c)(3) status is a status granted to charitable groups by the IRS. It is separate from being a not-for-profit corporation. Chapters and councils of TU come under the umbrella of TU national's 501(c)(3) status. This is one of the reasons chapters and councils report their financial status to national each year and use the same fiscal year as national. In order to maintain this status, you must be sure to report any change in your status (such as incorporating) to [volunteer operations staff](#).

There are four critical requirements to maintaining 501(c)(3) status:

1. Chapters or councils may not endorse or oppose any candidate for public office:

TU cannot endorse or oppose any candidates for elective office; nor can TU use its funds or any other of its resources (e.g., phones, computers, offices) to support or oppose candidates for elected political office. The prohibition is found in the federal tax code under provisions that regulate tax-exempt charitable organizations and applies to the national organization, councils, chapters, and to staff and volunteers acting on behalf of TU. While there is a variety of ways 501(c)(3) organizations can play neutral, non-partisan roles in the electoral process, failure to comply with these narrowly defined restraints could endanger TU's tax-exempt status. Because the penalties are so serious, we require you to consult with [volunteer operations staff](#) before considering any electoral activity. In addition, all volunteer leaders must not make statements that have the effect of endorsing or opposing a candidate for office. In addition to the obvious examples ("TU endorses Candidate A" or "TU opposes Candidate B"), bear in mind that anything you say publicly in your capacity as a TU leader regarding how you or someone else should vote ("I, the President of a chapter of TU, voted Egalitarian in the last elections, but I'm voting for the Contrarian Party this time" or "You may have voted Contrarian last time, but as President of a TU chapter I think you should vote Green this time") could be construed as a TU endorsement or statement in opposition. Even if you are careful to say that you are voicing a personal opinion and not speaking on behalf of TU, any such public statement may be misconstrued.

The above obviously places some limits on the free speech of TU volunteers, but it does not affect such private activity as making campaign contributions of personal funds or non-public statements of support or opposition to candidates, or (obviously) casting your vote. Nor does it prohibit you in your private, non-TU capacity, from participating in election-related canvassing or other activities or hosting or attending fund-raising events for candidates for elected office.

TU will continue to engage in advocacy efforts in pursuit of its mission and doing so will at times include communication regarding legislators' positions on issues on which TU has long been working. At all times, but particularly during campaign season, such communication must be handled in a way that is consistent with IRS rules for 501(c)(3) nonprofits. There are numerous ways to engage legislators and candidates that, if done correctly, are well within the IRS rules, such as candidate forums, questionnaires, and issue-oriented presentations to candidates and their staffs as long as TU representatives treat each candidate with equal consideration, do not pass judgment on their positions and are in accord with TU's mission. Please consider engaging in these activities in order to advance TU's mission, but err on the side of caution, and contact your [volunteer operations staff](#) before engaging in any kind of activity that could be construed as attempting to influence an election.

2. Chapters or councils must strictly account for the portion of its activities devoted to lobbying:

In the case of either direct or grassroots lobbying, [IRS rules require that a tax-exempt organization not devote a substantial part of its expenditures to lobbying](#). Chapters should restrict lobbying expenditures to no more than five percent of their annual budgets and refrain from any lobbying altogether unless there are well established accounting procedures for tracking expenditures and maintaining them at or below five percent.

The IRS defines "lobbying" very narrowly. Lobbying is the act of asking (such as through a letter or direct communication) an elected official or their staff to take action on a piece of legislation, such as voting for, against, or cosponsoring a bill. The official definition of "legislation" is reprinted below:

Legislation includes action by Congress, any state legislature, any local council, or similar governing body, with respect to acts, bills, resolutions, or similar items (such as legislative confirmation of appointive office), or by the public in referendum, ballot initiative, constitutional amendment, or similar procedure. It does not include actions by executive, judicial, or administrative bodies.

Controls are in place at the national level and applied to expenditures for activities such as congressional testimony, the Grassroots Activist Network, and direct mail appeals. Chapters and councils generally do not have such controls in place, and thus must exercise cautious restraint when it comes to lobbying. Additionally, no council or chapter should employ or retain the services of a lobbyist unless it files a 990 return with the IRS and is able to demonstrate in the filed return that its expenditures, in connection with the lobbyist, as well as any other lobbying expenditures, are collectively less than five percent of its total annual expenditures. If you have any further questions, or are concerned about your chapter's activities, contact your TU [volunteer operations staff](#) immediately. Please also be sure to contact staff before engaging in any lobbying.

3. Chapters or councils cannot donate money to a non-501(c)(3) organization or a 501(c)(3) organization that does not further TU's mission:

TU (including its chapters and councils) can donate money to other entities only if doing so furthers our tax exempt purpose (in other words, our mission broadly defined or interpreted) and only if that entity itself is exempt under section 501(c)(3) or a governmental entity organized under section 501(c)(1). If your chapter or council wants to make a donation to another nonprofit, at a minimum you should obtain confirmation that the organization has section 501(c)(3) status by obtaining a copy of the organization's IRS determination letter. If the organization does not have a determination letter and the donation would further our tax exemption purpose, you should consider partnering with the other organization on the project and directly pay for specific goods and/or services associated with the project. Similarly, TU cannot pay for an individual's legal fees in association with a lawsuit, unless TU itself is a party to the lawsuit.

For example, a TU chapter could in principle donate money to a local watershed council for a stream restoration project if the project were consistent with our tax exempt purpose and the watershed council had a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(1) exemption. Another example is the practice of giving money to the well-known "Casting for Recovery" program. While fly fishing is not central to TU's mission, we frequently use it as a recruiting tool, so supporting Casting for Recovery can be categorized as an acceptable fundraising expenditure. If the chapter goes further than just donating money and provides conservation materials to the program that can serve to educate the participants about our conservation mission, a portion of the expenditure may be classified as a program expenditure.

However, if the watershed council in the above example did not have 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(1) status with the IRS, this donation would potentially violate IRS rules. This is because the funds given to the chapter are eligible for an income tax deduction by TU donors, but if the funds were given directly by the donor to the watershed council, the donor would not be able to take a deduction. Similarly, if a local individual brought a lawsuit trying to stop pollution of a local trout stream, TU could not pay that person's legal fees. The IRS would view doing so as using tax-exempt donations to benefit an individual, even if the lawsuit is consistent with TU's exempt purpose. This especially holds true if the trout stream is adjacent to the individual's property. In a slightly different example, TU could not donate funds to the local hospital for a new treatment center even though the hospital is a 501(c)(3), because medical treatment is not part of TU's stated exempt purpose.

It is perfectly acceptable, however, for TU chapters to pay entities that are not tax exempt for services rendered so long as the expenditure corresponds to TU's exempt purpose. For example, TU can pay contractors for work done on stream restoration projects. In the stream restoration example given above, the TU chapter could comply with IRS rules by partnering with the watershed council on the project and directly paying for specific goods or services associated with the project. A TU chapter could also pay a lawyer for representing TU in a lawsuit challenging pollution in a local trout stream.

Chapters and councils should also contact TU's [volunteer operations staff](#) with any questions or uncertainty about any donation you wish to make.

4. Chapters or councils should use great caution if they choose to grant scholarships to individuals:

While 501(c)(3) organizations (TU, its chapters and councils) are permitted by the IRS to grant scholarships that further the charitable purpose of the organization, the IRS has strict and complex rules for governing the process of granting and reporting on scholarships. This is because giving a scholarship directly to an individual runs the risk of using tax-exempt dollars to benefit a specific individual. If your chapter or council would like to pursue giving scholarships to individuals where the chapter or council in question would be selecting those individuals itself, you must be aware of and comply with the following:

- Grants to individuals are not permitted unless there is a "charitable class" of potential recipients. This requires that the group of persons that can benefit must be either a large enough or an indefinite class, so that the assistance to the members of the class benefits the greater community. For example, giving scholarships to the board of directors' children or grandchildren would not meet this definition of charitable class due to its limited size. A scholarship fund cannot be established or operated to assist particular, pre-selected individuals from a limited population.
- No member of the selection committee can benefit, in any way, from choosing the scholarship recipients.
- The organization must ensure that any non-U.S. citizen who receives a scholarship is not on a published "Specifically Designated Nationals" terrorism watch list.
- The criteria for selecting the scholarship recipient must be objective, non-discriminatory, and reasonable related to the purpose of the grant.
- Grants must be made according to a procedure that results in performance by recipients of the activities that the grants are intended to finance.
- The organization must obtain reports from the recipients to determine whether they have performed the intended activities, this could come from the recipient themselves, or in the most prevalent case, from the institution of higher education where the scholarship funds are sent to be awarded to a specifically named scholarship recipient who received the award.
- A grant to an individual can only be renewed if the organization has information indicating the original grant was used for the intended activities.

Because every situation is unique, and because granting scholarships is a complex undertaking with many potential risks, it is required that you seek approval from TU's Vice President for Volunteer Operations or TU's Chief Financial Officer prior to granting scholarships. Additionally, it is advised that your chapter or council seek legal counsel with experience in this area of the law.

Another option to consider for TU chapters and councils that want to grant scholarships is to instead do so by giving money to a third party (i.e. a college or university) and allowing that institution to choose the sponsorship recipient.

Another option is a fellowship grant, which is different from a scholarship because it does not reimburse tuition costs. They are grants that are directly related to the recipient's education and our exempt purpose. The key to a permissible fellowship grant is that the recipient must render services to the chapter or council that further both the recipient's education and our exempt purpose. For example, a TU chapter can give a fellowship grant to a biology student who analyzes the water samples taken from the local stream that the chapter is restoring.

If you have any questions about any of the above policies or any other topic relating to TU's tax-exempt status, please do not hesitate to [volunteer operations staff](#). We have ongoing training sessions and tools to assist our chapters and councils in complying with these requirements. In today's climate of heightened scrutiny of the business practices in the for-profit and non-profit sectors, it is crucial that the activities of all parts of TU remain above reproach. Thank you for working with us to maintain TU's tax exemption.

Federal Tax Filing (Forms 990N, 990, 990T and 990EZ)

TU is a publicly supported 501(c)3 organized under a group exemption and the IRS requires the following:

- Each entity (chapter and council) under the exemption has its own employer identification number (EIN.) If you cannot find yours, look at the top of the Annual Activity Report in the Leaders Only Tools section of tu.org or contact volunteer operations staff.
- Each entity is required to file unique tax forms with the IRS.

Required forms to file with the IRS (*Questions about the correct Form 990 to file? Please visit: www.irs.gov or contact [volunteer operations staff](#) for more information.*)

- Gross receipts normally (on average over three years) \leq \$50,000
 - Form 990N – short online form
 - TU national's accountant will file this form for your chapter/council based on data entered into your Annual Activity Report - be sure to file that report by the May 15 deadline annually.
- Gross receipts $<$ \$200,000, and total assets $<$ \$500,000
 - File Form 990-EZ
 - These forms sometimes complex, so it is advisable to get help (from an accountant experienced with non-profit orgs.) if you are not comfortable.
 - Note: Organizations eligible to file the 990EZ may choose to file a full return.
- Gross receipts \geq \$200,000, or total assets \geq \$500,000
 - File Form 990
 - These forms sometimes long and complex, so it is advisable to get help (from an accountant experienced with non-profit orgs.) if you are not comfortable.

The Forms 990, 990T or 990EZ must be filed by the 15th of the 5th month after your chapter's fiscal year end. Because TU's fiscal year ends on March 31, required forms are due to the IRS on August 15. Check with your state tax authorities for local state filing requirements.

There are additional, separate requirements for reporting "unrelated business income." If a nonprofit's gross proceeds from unrelated business income exceed \$1,000, that income must be reported to the IRS using Form 990T. If your chapter or council conducts a revenue-generating business, and the gross revenue from that business exceeds \$1,000, you should consult with your chapter's accountant regarding whether that revenue constitutes unrelated business income. The most common examples of unrelated business income include advertising income from the sale of ads in newsletters and magazines, revenue generated from fishing trips that are not educational or conservation-oriented, and fees collected for the use of facilities or land owned by the organization where the use of the property is not directly related to the exempt purpose of the organization. Revenues from raffles, banquets, auctions, and other sales of donated merchandise do not count as unrelated business income. Many chapters and councils want to know how to acknowledge supporting businesses in their newsletter or e-newsletter without prompting "unrelated business income." Chapter and councils can run a generic ad thanking sponsors and supporters without this being considered unrelated business income so long as the ad does not reference the business address or website and the newsletter is only distributed to the membership.

If you have additional questions about tax filing requirements, please contact TU's [volunteer operations staff](#).

If a chapter or council fails to file the form 990 or 990EZ, if required as measured by gross receipts, the IRS will automatically revoke your chapter or council's exempt status.

Additional Policies and Controls

The IRS Form 990 includes several questions focusing attention and governance practices on accountability and transparency. These questions are specifically designed to elicit whether your chapter or council has a [written conflict of interest policy](#), an approved [whistleblower protection policy](#), a [document retention policy](#) and a procedure for reviewing the IRS Form 990 prior to filing. All TU chapters and councils large enough to file the Form 990 have these policies in place. It is advised that regardless of your chapter or council's size, you consider adopting these policies and procedures so as well.

Donor Letters

Another IRS requirement for TU chapters and councils is to be sure that you have the necessary language in your donor letters. According to the IRS, this includes:

- Written acknowledgment required to substantiate a charitable contribution of \$250 or more
- Name of the organization (i.e., your chapter or council)
- Amount of cash contribution
- Description (but not value) of non-cash contribution
- Statement that no goods or services were provided by the organization, if that is the case
- Description and good faith estimate of the value of goods or services, if any, that organization provided in return for the contribution.

You can use this [sample donor letter](#) as the foundation for your gift acknowledgement letters.

Chapter/ Council Incorporation

Incorporation is a complicated subject. The IRS does not require subordinates (chapters) under a group exemption (which TU holds) to become incorporated within the states in which they operate. However, each state may have different registration requirements, and chapter and council leaders should become familiar with local regulations and comply with state or local laws.

In general, there is no advantage for a chapter or council to separately incorporate. For tax exemption purposes, chapters and councils are covered by TU's 501(c)(3) exemption and do not need to seek separate nonprofit status. Chapters, councils and their officers and directors are also covered by TU's GCL policy and its directors' and officers' coverage. The primary reason for incorporating (protecting individual members and directors from liability) is largely dealt with through TU insurance. A chapter or council that is separately incorporated has the same coverage under TU's insurance policies as a chapter or council that is not separately incorporated. An additional barrier to separate incorporation is the administrative burden (different in each state) of technical rules and requirements to create and maintain corporations. Most states have an annual filing requirement and filing fees.

State Sales Tax Exemption

In order to avoid paying sales tax on goods and services purchased by the chapter or council, the chapter or council must have a sales tax exemption issued by the state. Like incorporation, the rules and applications for this vary by state. Generally, a form is required describing the organization and its activities. In some states a much shorter form may be used by entities that already have 501(c)(3) status. Contact your state tax authorities for the forms and information.

Document Retention

In order to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations -- including 18 U.S.C. 1519 and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act -- it is strongly recommended that chapters or councils with staff or those large enough to be required to file a Form 990 adopt a formal document retention policy. Many chapters and councils could benefit from such a policy in order to prohibit criminal destruction, alteration or cover-up of records; eliminate accidental or innocent destruction of records; as well as facilitate chapter or council operations by promoting efficiency and freeing up valuable storage space. There is a [sample document retention policy](#) in the Tacklebox.

Chapter 11: Other Policies & Requirements

The following requirements and policies are also important for all board members to know and understand as fiduciaries of your TU chapter or council.

Trout Unlimited Illegal Substance Policy

The sale and use of marijuana is illegal under federal laws. As a condition of receiving federal grants, TU certifies that it is in compliance with all federal laws. Therefore, TU, its chapters, and its councils shall not knowingly accept contributions from known marijuana industry members or which otherwise originate from any source or activity prohibited by law. For the same reason, Trout Unlimited, its chapters, and its councils shall not allow the use of marijuana or other illegal substances at any of their events even in states where the sale or use of marijuana is legal under state law.

Chapter Dues

TU's bylaws specifically state that chapters are not allowed to charge chapter dues. All TU members in good standing are entitled to all the benefits of chapter membership. Chapters may solicit separate voluntary donations to the chapter to cover newsletter printing or other activities, but these additional donations must be voluntary and may not be required for chapter membership.

Circulation of Membership Lists

Chapters and councils may obtain membership lists from the TU website. Circulation of a chapter membership list to agencies or other organizations is against TU policy and can give rise to liability for violation of Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regulations. The national office complies with FTC regulations by not disclosing protected names when it markets its membership list. Chapter and council lists are not similarly "sanitized" and, thus, are not transferable.

Litigation Policy

Several of TU's core interests are at stake whenever any part of the organization engages in Litigation or contributes TU funds toward Litigation in the organization's name. TU's financial resources and reputation are on the line when TU becomes a party to Litigation and any financial liability incurred by councils or chapters resulting from Litigation could potentially become the responsibility of the national organization.

Litigation proceedings are among the most public acts TU can take, and these actions can substantially affect how the public or specific individuals view the organization. This, in turn, can profoundly affect TU's relationship with state and federal agencies, elected officials, potential members, donors and foundations. It is critical that any Litigation filed in TU's name or to which a TU Entity contributes be consistent with TU's mission, values, and strategies. TU needs to consider the effects of proposed Litigation on all branches of the organization and their activities. It is also important for TU to monitor the status of pending Litigation. TU's auditors and government grant programs often require a current status list regarding all Litigation in which TU participates.

TU's [Litigation Policy](#) ensures that staff and volunteer leaders are coordinating activities and applying consistent criteria in considering and proceeding with Litigation. TU's [Litigation Policy](#) is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Ensure the national office and volunteer leaders are aware of and approve potential Litigation before it is commenced, and to ensure that decisions to participate in Litigation are made using consistent criteria.
- Ensure the national office and volunteer leaders are immediately aware of the commencement of any Litigation against TU, its staff or officers to properly defend against the Litigation and secure available insurance.
- Allow senior management and volunteer leaders to evaluate both individual cases and TU's complete universe of Litigation to ensure consistency with TU's overall programs and available resources.
- Ensure the TU Entity proposing Litigation is able to handle the financial obligations of the Litigation.
- Keep the national organization and volunteer leaders aware of the status of Litigation as it progresses.
- Maximize the opportunity to protect related communications under the attorney-client privilege
- Maintain information about all of TU's Litigation in a central location so that it is easily accessible to TU's senior management, auditors, General Counsel, Legal Advisor and the Board of Trustees.



Public Access Disputes

Disputes relating to public access to river, streams, and lakes for recreational purposes can be controversial, and they have the potential to be divisive among Trout Unlimited members and supporters. In 2006, the Board of Trustees adopted the [Trout Unlimited Policy Concerning Stream Access Issues](#), which sets up a process that TU chapters and councils must follow before becoming involved in a dispute concerning public access. The policy sets up a working group of grass-roots leaders and at-large trustees charged with consulting with chapters and councils contemplating involvement in public access disputes and with making recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees on whether and to what extent chapters and councils should become involved in such issues. The issues covered by the policy include disputes with individual landowners over the scope of their property rights and TU's participation in administrative or legislative processes on issues that could affect the public's right to access private land for recreational purposes. If your chapter or council is contemplating involvement in such an issue, it must review the policy and comply with it.

Gift Acceptance Policy

As a tax-exempt nonprofit corporation, TU encourages the solicitation and acceptance of gifts that will help fulfill TU's mission to conserve, protect, and restore coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. TU welcomes donations, and expressions of interest about making donations, that are consistent with the mission of TU, regardless of the size of donation, from individuals, families, businesses, foundations, or other sources.

However, such gifts must be considered in accordance with [TU's Gift Acceptance Policy \(July 2023\)](#). If you have any questions regarding the policy, please feel free to reach out to your VolOps or Development staff for more information.

Chapter 12: Code of Ethics

At TU we are committed to honest and ethical behavior and to accomplishing our mission with integrity. Integrity in all aspects of our operations is central to our success as a credible broker of scientifically and economically responsible conservation solutions. This Code of Ethics is designed to put in place a system to ensure we are aware of and can take prompt action against any questionable behavior. It is also intended to help each of us focus on the duty we owe to our members. This Code applies to each and every one of TU's volunteers on the chapter and council level, since we are all responsible for safeguarding and promoting TU's reputation. Of course, many situations will involve subtleties and complexities that lead to difficult choices. When in doubt, take a step back to ask yourself whether the situation feels right, and consider whether you feel confident that your actions would withstand scrutiny. If necessary, take another careful look at this Code for guidance and seek advice from volunteer operations staff.

Company Assets

TU chapter or council assets must be safeguarded and used only for accomplishing TU's mission. This includes, without limitation, protection (including from loss or theft) of the TU chapter or council's funds, physical facilities, office equipment, computer software, records, donor information, TU's trademarks and other proprietary information. The TU Policy on Financial and Property Controls for Chapters and Councils sets out requirements and best practices for safeguarding your chapter's or council's assets.

Legal Compliance

TU and volunteers acting in TU's name must obey and comply with all applicable laws and regulations. It is every volunteer's responsibility to be aware of and to comply with legal requirements applicable to his/her position.

Personal Integrity

It is important for the integrity of the whole organization that TU's leaders be persons of integrity. While the Board does not expect council or chapter leaders to conduct background checks on current or prospective officers and members of boards of directors, chapters and councils must not knowingly elect to a chapter or council office or to a chapter or council board of directors a person who has been convicted of a crime involving fraud, dishonesty or financial impropriety or who is a registered sex offender. The Board of Trustees may grant an exception to this provision.

Openness and Disclosure

It is TU's responsibility to provide comprehensive and timely information to the public, the media, and all stakeholders about its operations. All information about any chapter or council will fully and honestly reflect its current operations.

In raising funds, TU chapters and councils will respect the rights of donors, as follows:

- To be informed of TU's mission, the way the resources will be used, and the chapter/council's capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes;
- To be informed of the identity of those serving on the organization's Board of Directors and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities;
- To have access to the chapter or councils most recent financial reports;
- To be assured that all restricted gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given;
- To receive appropriate acknowledgement and recognition for gifts;
- To be assured that information about donations is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by the law;
- To expect that all relationships with individuals representing TU will be professional in nature;
- To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organizations, or hired solicitors;
- To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that the chapter or council intends to share; and,
- To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.

Confidential Information

While TU strives to be as open as possible about its operations, certain information is by nature confidential and should not be disclosed to the public, including, but not limited to:

- All donor and member personal information;
- Information relating to hiring decisions and to current, former and prospective employees; and
- Financial reports and data that have not been formally reported to the public through presentations to the Board of Trustees, Federal Form 990, 990N, or audited financial statements. Such information represents a valuable corporate asset that should be protected as we protect other valued assets.

Conflicts of Interest

Volunteers must avoid any personal activity, investment or association that could interfere with, or could appear to interfere with, good judgment concerning TU's best interests. Volunteers may not use TU property, information or position for personal gain, including taking personal opportunities that are discovered through the use of TU property, information or position. Volunteers should avoid even the appearance of such a conflict. For example, there is a likely conflict of interest if a volunteer:

- Causes the chapter or council to engage in business transactions with relatives or friends;
- Uses nonpublic TU, donor or vendor information for personal gain by his/herself, relatives or friends (including securities transactions based on such information);
- Has more than a modest financial interest in the chapter or council's vendors, donors or competitors; or
- Competes, or prepares to compete, with the chapter or council while still serving on the chapter or council Board of Directors.

There are other situations in which a conflict of interest may arise. Any volunteer who becomes aware of any material transaction or relationship that could reasonably be expected to give rise to such a conflict of interest, or has concerns about any situation, must follow the steps outlined in the section entitled "Reporting Violations." For chapters or councils with staff or those large enough to be required to file a Form 990, it is strongly recommended that you adopt a formal [conflict of interest policy](#).

Fair Dealing

No volunteer may take unfair advantage of anyone through manipulation, concealment, abuse of privileged information, misrepresentation of material facts, or any other unfair-dealing practice. Volunteers should endeavor to deal fairly with the TU's donors, suppliers, competitors and employees.

Gifts, Bribes and Kickbacks

Other than for modest gifts and benefits given and received in the normal course of business, no volunteer may give gifts to or receive gifts from the chapter or council's donors and vendors. In no event should a volunteer put the chapter or council in a position that would be embarrassing if the gift were made public. Dealing with government employees often is different from dealing with private persons. Many governmental bodies strictly prohibit the receipt of any gratuities by their employees, including meals and entertainment. Volunteers must be aware of and strictly follow such prohibitions. Any volunteer who pays or receives bribes or kickbacks will be subject to corrective action, and reported, as warranted, to the appropriate authorities. A kickback or bribe includes anything of value intended to improperly obtain favorable treatment.

Loans

No volunteer may request or accept a loan from TU national, a TU chapter, or council.

Political Contributions

Chapters, councils, or volunteers or staff acting on behalf of TU may not endorse or oppose any candidate for public office, nor can TU use its funds to support or oppose candidates for elected political office. The prohibition is found in the federal tax code. Volunteers may, however, engage in political activity with your own resources on your own time, subject to applicable law and the TU policies and rules governing such political activity.

Anti-Harassment Policy

1. Statement of Philosophy. Trout Unlimited has a longstanding commitment to a work and corporate environment that respects the dignity and worth of each individual. Inappropriate behavior and unlawful harassment create conditions that are wholly inconsistent with this commitment. The purpose of the policy set forth below is not to regulate the personal morality of employees or TU volunteers, but rather to foster an environment that is free from all forms of harassment, whether that harassment is because of race, color, gender, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by law.
2. Discriminatory Harassment Prohibited. Discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, will not be tolerated by TU. This policy applies to all forms of harassment, whether on TU premises or in any TU-related setting, including but not limited to social events, business trips, staff retreats, board meetings, or TU volunteer events. This policy applies regardless of the gender of the individuals involved. This policy covers, (a) all employees of TU, including applicants for employment; (b) volunteers at all levels of the organization; and (c) third parties, such as clients, customers, contractors and vendors, to the extent that TU has control over the individual and the conduct of the individual affects the work environment or interferes with the performance of work.
3. Sexual Harassment Defined. For purposes of this policy, sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
 - Submission to such conduct is either explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's employment;
 - or Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual;
 - or Such conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Some examples of what may constitute sexual harassment are: threatening to take or taking employment actions, such as discharge, demotion or reassignment, if sexual favors are not granted; demands for sexual favors in exchange for favorable or preferential treatment; unwelcome and repeated flirtations, propositions or advances; unwelcome physical contact; whistling; leering; improper gestures; horseplay; use of stereotypes; offensive, insulting, derogatory or degrading remarks; unwelcome comments about appearance, whether positive or negative; sexual jokes or use of sexually explicit or offensive language; gender- or sex-based pranks; and the display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures. The above list of examples is not intended to be all-inclusive, and applies not only to physical and face-to-face interactions, but also to electronic communications such as voicemail, email, text messages, blogs, and social media. Care should be taken in informal business situations, including TU parties, staff retreats, volunteer events, and business trips.

4. Other Harassment Defined. For purposes of this policy, other harassment is defined as verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her race, color, gender, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by law, and that:
 - creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment;
 - or unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance.

Some examples of such harassment are: using epithets or slurs; mocking, ridiculing or mimicking another's culture, accent, appearance or customs; threatening, intimidating or engaging in hostile or offensive acts that focus on an individual's race, color, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by law, including stereotyping, jokes, or pranks; the displaying on walls, bulletin boards or elsewhere on TU premises, or circulating in the workplace, of written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward a person or group because of race, color, gender, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by law. The above list of examples is not intended to be all-inclusive, and applies not only to physical and face-to-face interactions, but also to electronic communications such as voicemail, email, text messages, blogs, and social media.

5. Consensual Relationships. Consensual romantic and/or sexual relationships between a TU employee with supervisory authority and any subordinate, including one not directly under the supervisor, will compromise TU's ability to enforce its policy against sexual harassment. Consequently, supervisors are strongly discouraged from having a consensual romantic and/or sexual relationship with a person reporting to him/her or in the direct chain of reporting responsibility. However, if such a relationship does occur, each of the employees must promptly disclose the relationship to the Executive Vice President or the Human Resources Director. If the relationship is consensual and continuing, management will take appropriate actions, including in every instance, the transfer of reporting responsibility to eliminate the direct, or indirect, chain of reporting between the individuals involved.
6. Reporting Discriminatory Harassment. Trout Unlimited strongly encourages the prompt reporting of all incidents of discriminatory harassment. For TU employees, if you believe you are being harassed or if you have witnessed harassing behavior towards another employee, whether by another TU employee, a TU volunteer or third-party contractor, you should report it immediately to your supervisor or, if you prefer not to advise your supervisor, report it to the Executive Vice President, Human Resources Director, General Counsel, or any member of the senior staff. As a volunteer, if you believe you are being harassed or if you have witnessed harassing behavior towards other volunteers or towards TU employees, you should report it immediately to the Vice President for Volunteer Operations or the General Counsel. If, at any time, as TU employees or volunteers, you feel it would be unreasonable to use this procedure to report harassment because of unusual or unique circumstances, TU encourages you to discuss your concerns with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees or any other member of the Board of Trustees.
7. Investigation. When an employee reports harassment as specified above, TU will undertake a prompt investigation appropriate to the circumstances. The steps to be taken during the investigation cannot be fixed in advance but will vary depending upon the nature of the allegations. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigative process to the extent practicable and consistent with TU's need to undertake a full investigation.
8. Resolving the Matter. Upon completion of the investigation, appropriate remedial action will be taken, if necessary and supported by the facts. When the charge relates to employees, remedial action may include oral or written counseling, referral to formal counseling, disciplinary suspension or probation, or termination from TU. If the charge relates to a TU volunteer, remedial action may include either referral to appropriate governmental authorities or expulsion as a member of the organization or both. If the charge relates to a third party, remedial action may include either reporting of the incident to the superiors of the person involved or referral to appropriate governmental authorities or both.
9. Nonretaliation. An individual who reports incidents that the individual, in good faith, believes to be violating this policy, or who is involved in the investigation of harassment, will not be subject to reprisal or retaliation. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy and should be reported immediately. The report and investigation of allegations of retaliation will follow the procedures set forth in this policy. Any person found to have retaliated against an individual for reporting discriminatory harassment or participating in an investigation of allegations of such conduct will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.
10. Training. So that employees understand this policy and their obligations under it, TU periodically will conduct training relating to the policy and its implementation.
11. Communication. This policy is part of TU's overall commitment to open communication. The policy will also be published as a formal policy of the Board of Trustees of TU. Trout Unlimited encourages any employee with workplace concerns of any nature (including, but not limited to, any alleged discrimination) to bring those concerns to the attention of the Executive Vice President, or any member of the senior staff.

Reporting Violations

Any volunteer who becomes aware of a suspected violation of law, TU policy, or any provision of this Code, whether before or after it has occurred, must promptly report it to volunteer operations staff. Any volunteer who remains concerned after speaking with volunteer operations staff or feels uncomfortable speaking with such persons (for whatever reason), should contact TU's Chief Executive Officer. In any such situation, the volunteer will be protected from retaliation for initiating a report under this section.

THE INFORMATION PROVIDED AND PROCEDURES SET FORTH IN THIS PUBLICATION DO NOT CONFER CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OF ANY KIND UPON ANY VOLUNTEER OR THIRD PARTY OR CREATE CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS OF ANY KIND.