

NEWS CASTER

Overmountain Chapter
Trout Unlimited Ron Harrington, Editor

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COMING EVENTS

Regular Meeting: 09-14-06
Doe River Cleanup: 09-30-06
BOD: 10-05-06
Regular Meeting: 10-12-06

The September 14, 2006

Meeting will be held as usual at Cam's Catering, 203 High Point Drive, Johnson City, TN. A buffet dinner begins at 6:00, followed by a short business meeting. Our speaker will Johnson City Chief of Police, John Lowry. He will be speaking about the Department's program for "at risk" youth, which includes a fishing experience.

Trout Unlimited is North America's leading Coldwater fisheries conservation organization, with more than 150,000 members dedicated to the protection and restoration of trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds.

Todd Burleson Memorial Stream Cleanup Set for Saturday, September 30, 2006

This is the 12th annual stream cleanup that honors Todd Burleson, an Overmountain Trout Unlimited member, environmentalist and fishing guide who passed away in 1997. The cleanup is held in picturesque Roan Mountain on the Doe River. It is a beautiful place to bring your family for a half day of beautifying, socializing and good food.

The Stream Cleanup begins at 9:00AM and we will meet at the Roan Mountain Community Park. To get there, follow Highway 19-E to Roan Mountain. Turn at Highway 143 (143 dead ends into 19-E) and cross the bridge over the Doe River. The Community Park is on your left and visible from the bridge. Turn left at the first intersection and proceed to the parking area. At 12:00 noon the cleanup part ends and the rest of the fun begins. Dress in old clothes for you may get a little dirty. Bags and Gloves will be provided for you. We will work in teams so bring your friends.

For More Information contact Bob Fondry at 423-772-3236. See more about Todd Burleson on page 3.



SMILE WHILE YOU WORK: OMTU President Perry Rindfleisch seems mighty proud of this bag of trash he picked up along the South Holston River during the annual cleanup on August 12. See page 5 for a complete report.

JULY COLDWATER MEETING REPORT BY BILL BEAZELL

I attended the July Coldwater meeting held in Knoxville on July 29, 2006. Eighteen people registered, including representatives of all 8 TU chapters in TN.

TVA reports that water runoff has been 2/3 of normal, so reservoirs are low.

Didymo reports from Web sites are being monitored but nothing new is going on in TN. A New Zealand report shows low trout growth and numbers in infested streams. Only caddis and stone flies are apparently doing well.

TWRA reported very high catch rates on the South Holston tailwater, and record 2.2 fish per hour and 7.2 per outing on the Clinch.

USDA Forest Service has been taken to court over allowing off-road vehicles to use a section in the upper Tellico River watershed.

A Forest service study of the results of the cutting of rhododendrons along selected streams has shown deeper pools and increase in number of fish. Matching funds for additional projects are available from USDA-Forest Service.

The next meeting will be January 27, 2007. February 8, 2007 will be the "snow" day.

FY 2006 OMTU Board and Officers

Officers:

- President: Perry Rindfleisch
- Vice President: T.A. Smith
- Treasurer: Randall Rogers
- Secretary: Bob Sherill
- Immediate Past President: Bob Viers

Board Members:

- Marcia Carter
- Bill Bezell
- Bob Fondry
- Charles Martin
- T. A. Smith
- Ron Harrington
- Gary Barrigar

TWRA NEEDS VOLUNTEERS TO HELP WITH FALL STEAM SAMPLING

Jim Habera, Region IV Coldwater Fisheries, TWRA, has requested OMTU assistance with the sampling of two trout streams during September:

Stony Creek: September 20

Beaverdam Creek: September 29.

If interested, please contact Jim at 423-522-2459, or e-mail jim.habera@state.tn.us

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Perry Rindfleisch, OMTU President

All Overmountain Chapter Members

Greetings after a full summer of activities that hopefully had you spending some time on our local streams and lakes, or perhaps streams outside our area.

Our chapter has been very active in planning for our new fiscal year that begins October 1st. We are delighted to announce that TA Smith has agreed to be Vice President of our chapter and I have agreed to remain as President for one more year. We are still looking for a program chair to replace Bob Sherrill who has done a wonderful job in this position for 10 years. Please join me in offering a big "thank you" to Bob for his many years of faithful service to the chapter. If you have an interest in helping with this important function please contact me.

With the help of Bart Carter at TWRA we have redesigned the rainbow fish barrier at Hampton Creek and are applying for an Embrace A Stream grant for 2007. This will be a \$25,000 project for our chapter and needs to be done fairly quickly since the old barrier is washing out and failing in it's primary purpose of keeping the rainbow and brook trout segregated.

We will need a strong turnout from chapter members for this project that will involve hundreds of needed person hours to divert the creek and then prepare forms for pouring concrete to create this new barrier. This is a one-of-a-kind project in the country since it is not on Federal land but brings together the Federal, State and local governments plus private groups like TU. Assuming funding from TU, construction is planned for summer 2007. I hope you will join us in making this a huge success for the Brook trout.

Cherokee Chapter in Greeneville, under president Bob Ross has agreed to join with us in bringing this project to reality. What a great opportunity to have both of our chapters working together. We welcome their support and help.

Please come out for our meetings his fall. And bring a guest so others can enjoy the fellowship and learn about our mission.

Perry

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY RELEASES 2006 REPORT

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality office released the 2006 state water quality report in July, and is now in the process of holding public hearings around the state. At the hearing held in Abingdon, Virginia, on July 19th, Allen Newman, water permit and planning manager, announced that Southwest Virginia has cleaner lakes and reservoirs than the state average, but area streams continue to have problems. For example, of the 1,500 miles of rivers and streams studied in the nine-county region in Southwest Virginia, 374 miles were inhospitable to aquatic life, 274 miles had fish but they could not be eaten, and 669 miles were hazardous for swimming or wading. The main contamination comes from fecal coliform and e-coli bacteria, PCBs, some leads, and mercury. The causes include mine water runoff, direct discharge of human waste into streams from nearby homes, aging sewage treatment plants, runoff of pesticides, fertilizer, and automotive chemicals; and livestock that mess up the banks, and deposit waste directly in the stream.

Some 2000 acres of the region's 3,700 acres of lakes have been listed as "impaired" in at least one of six categories. Statewide, 97% of the lakes and reservoirs are impaired. The main problem with area lakes, including Laurel Bed Lake in Russell County and Hidden Valley Lake in Washington County, is the lack of dissolved oxygen. Aquatic insects, such as mayflies and stoneflies, cannot survive in this environment, thus depleting a main food source for the fish.

In an editorial that appeared in the July 16, 2006 edition of the Bristol Herald Courier, the editor aptly pointed out that only 28% of the streams in the state were examined, while most of the lakes and reservoirs were included. "The state should be assessing the quality of all waters. **Poor water quality cannot be found where no one is looking.** And similar problems are likely to exist in these unstudied areas. Additionally, the lack of comprehensive answers makes year-to-year analysis difficult. We cannot say with certainty whether the water is getting better or worse.

See **Water Quality Report**, Page 3

Water Quality Report From page 2

Virginia's waters are a natural treasure; cleaning them up must be a state and regional priority for years to come."

The report can be seen on the department's web site.

GSMNP ISSUES ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ON LIFTING OF BROOK TROUT FISHING BAN

On August 7, 2006, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Superintendent, Dale Ditmanson, released the environmental assessment on the lifting of the brook trout fishing ban. A 30-year prohibition on catching and keeping this native fish was lifted in April on an experimental basis. This was reported in the April edition of the NewsCaster. Park managers deem open fishing as the "environmentally preferred" approach so long as the catch and release program can be used if the trout numbers start to decline. Comments will be taken through August 31 at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>.

OMTU Fishing Outing Set for October

By Bob Sherill

A fishing outing is being organized for OMTU members and guests during the week of October 3-8, 2006. The plans are as follows:

On October 3, we will travel to Tellico River basin, located in the southern part of the Cherokee National Forest.

- The Tellico River is one of the largest freestone streams in the southeast.
- We will fish the Tellico River, Bald River, and North River. There are also a number of brook trout waters nearby.
- We will camp at the North River Forest Service Campground.
- Contact Bob Sherill, 276-623-0863 or bobsher@naxs.net for more information.

MORE ABOUT TODD BURLESON By Bob Fondry

Each year in late September we gather to honor a deceased member of the Overmountain Chapter, Trout Unlimited, with a cleanup along Doe River in the Roan Mountain area of Carter County. This, the 12th annual cleanup, was started and managed for several years by Todd, a favorite son of the area. Todd was an avid conservationist as well as a trout fisherman. He revered the waters and wanted to maintain their beauty, unspoiled and blotted by trash and garbage. He used this approach to maintain the land and water, and he worked hard to restore and preserve the area trout streams. He appreciated others who donated their time and effort to this cause.

Despite suffering from a kidney disease since age 18, he tried to live life to its fullest, and he didn't let this stop him from working hard for this cause and enjoying fishing in the streams he loved. Fishing and teaching others to fly fish was a joy to him. Here is a comment that I found on the Web, posted by "Ridge Runner" in May, 2003: "For those of you who have fished in Tennessee and North Carolina over the past decade, I trust some of you remember a lad who died and left us way too early, Todd Burleson of Roan Mountain. Todd always tried to remind us that 'Once man tears something natural up, man can't put it back like God made it.'" This is what motivates us to continue this wonderful tradition. Todd's mother, father, and wife, Donna, also continue to be active, doing the cooking and providing other treats that the participants enjoy after the event.

Please help us continue the tradition. Plan now to join us on September 30 at the Roan Mountain Community Park.



REPORT VIOLATORS!
Call TWRA Hotline at
800-332-0900

You can help TWRA game and fish officers with their role of enforcement of the Tennessee fishing regulations by reporting violations to the TWRA Hotline. They need "real-time" information such as nature of violation, date, location, vehicle description, license plate numbers and so forth.

ROCKY FORK TRACT UP FOR SALE

As many of you may know by now, 10,000 acres of privately owned mountain land in Unicoi and Greene Counties known as "Rocky Fork Tract, is up for sale. This land, which includes two wild trout streams, Rocky Fork and Lower Higgins Creek, has been managed for many years by TWRA via a lease. The potential buyer reportedly plans to develop a resort community on the land. The deal is not final. A coalition of individuals and organizations is being organized to raise the funds to make a competitive bid to keep this open. For more information, go to www.saverockyfork.org.

Source: George Grant, Bristol Herald Courier, September 7, 2006

Renew your Trout Unlimited membership today!

Become an active member by attending meetings and participating in OMTU activities such as stream cleanups and those aimed at promoting conservation of our wetlands and streams.

Update on Mountain City Request to Change Times for Water Removal From Lowe Spring
By Bill Bezell

Recently I spoke with Andrew Tolley, Manager of the Johnson City office of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) regarding the status of the proposed changes in the Permit issued to Mountain City for removal of water from the Lowe Spring, which empties into Doe Creek in Johnson County. The requested changes, dated April 19, 2006, are still awaiting approval by State and National agencies.

The proposed changes were the result of Mountain City's appeal for water removal at times different from the current time frame which runs from 7:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. daily. The rationale given was the need for a better distribution to meet the needs at the Northeast Correctional Complex. The proposed changes will allow withdrawals at any time of the day from November 1 through April 30. The withdrawal of water would be prohibited between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. from May 1-October 31. This would allegedly help protect the water quality during the hotter months of the year, which was a concern raised by members of OMTU when this was first made public.]

The City has not asked for more water than the maximum of 400,000 gallons/24 hours per day. The 700 gallons per minute and 0.5 million/24 hour limits are still in effect.

Report on TCTU Summer Council Meeting

By Bill Bezell

I attended the summer TCTU Council meeting, held in Knoxville on July 29, 2006. Here is a summary:

Approximately fourteen attended the meeting. The Council treasurer reported a balance of \$8,000. The TU National balance was reported at 1.2 million.

Casting for Recovery, a program for women who have undergone a mastectomy was presented by Wanda Taylor. The cost of this proich runs a week, is \$780 per person.

Excitement over the Forest Service report on the results of cutting back rhododendron along mountain trout streams led to a vote to set aside \$2,000 to fund additional projects.

A slate of nominees for officers was presented: Chair—George Lane; Vice-Chair—Open; Secretary—Mark Spangler; Treasurer—Tony Curtis; and NLC Rep—Steve Brown.

Food for Thought

“If we want to make the world a better place, a common goal we must share is to at least attempt to recover and restore some of the ecological functions of our waterways that previous generations sacrificed unknowingly through infrastructure development. Things that we thought were in the best interest of mankind have been in the worst interest of nature. Of course it takes time to repair what has been damaged and success does not always come quickly. Conservation is not convenient. We live in an instant gratification society—we don't like to wait for results.”

Justin Laughlin
Stream Restoration Biologist
VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Source: Appalachian Voice,
Late Summer, 2006

STREAM CLEANUP SCHEDULE

> Burleson Memorial
Doe River Cleanup: 09-30-06

Reserve a place on your calendar now for this last cleanup of 2006.

Check the website calendar or the NewsCaster published just before the cleanup for details.

Bob Fondry

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The Hatchery Controversy

By Ron Harrington, Editor

In a relatively little known decision, the Bush administration declared in a policy statement on June 3, 2004, that hatchery salmon and steelhead can "count as wild fish when determining if stock needs protection under the Endangered Species Act." Many environmentalists see this as an attempt to circumvent the Endangered Species Act. The idea is to pass off hatchery fish for wild ones to avoid taking the steps necessary to protect the habitat of endangered or threatened species. This came as a shock to the scientific community and has given impetus to the "hatchery vs. natural propagation" controversy, which has been ongoing for many years.

When I was young and first interested in fishing, catching stocked trout was the only experience I had. My buddies and I could hardly wait for opening day of the season, which was like a circus. For weeks before that big day, we would watch for the hatchery trucks, seek information on where they were stocking, and cruise our favorite stream (the headwaters of the South Fork, Holston River) with light bread in our pockets to do a little "locating." And I can finally admit to the game warden in Smyth County, VA, that I even pushed the season a little from time to time (I hope that the statute of limitations has expired). With no stocked trout, I probably would have never become a fly fisherman.

But as the fishing years rolled by, I, like many other anglers, developed a deep appreciation and understanding of the importance of wild fish, and the thrill of catching one. I also became interested in fly-fishing and fly-tying. And it's great that we live in an area where wild trout are now accessible and there are streams so designated and no longer stocked. There are 625 miles of wild trout streams in Northeast Tennessee, most of which are on public land in the Cherokee National Forest. There are an additional 220 miles in the GSMNP. Virginia has 2,300 of streams so designated. In addition, the fingerlings stocked in the many tailwaters in Tennessee soon take on many features of wild trout.

In 1970, Montana stopped stocking a section of the Madison River with hatchery trout, and four years later discovered that large trout (three years and older) had increased by 942 percent. As a result, Montana no longer stocks its rivers. They found that the stocked trout, though relatively short-lived, are very competitive for food and survive long enough to eat the wild juveniles, out compete the wild adults, and often spread disease.

I am not advocating that we eliminate hatcheries. Rather, we need to see them as an important part of the continuum of managing the trout fishery. Hatcheries are needed to hold rare stock to save endangered species, and they are needed to provide fishing where none would exist otherwise. They get people interested in fishing and out in the streams. These people help support the system. On the other hand, however, hatchery trout, especially those stocked as adults, should not be placed in streams set aside for wild trout. And hatchery fish should never be seen as "wild" for the purposes of ignoring habitat protection.

Sources: Ted Williams, "Something's Fishy," *Audubon*, May-June, 2005. TWRA Web Site. VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

SOUTH HOLSTON RIVER CLEANUP A SUCCESS!!!

By Bill Bezell

Despite a rainy start, 800 volunteers gathered 35 tons of trash on the South Holston Lake and River during the 14th Annual Cleanup. Those who braved the elements and put forth the effort to pick up trash were rewarded at the end of the day with a social gathering, a great picnic, live music, free tees, and over 300 prizes including a kayak

The success of the tail-water part of the cleanup was due to the efforts of 65 registered participants. Two sites were set up and manned by volunteers from the South Holston Ruritan Club and the Overmountain Chapter, Trout Unlimited. At the Weir Dam Ken Alfrey coordinated the efforts of six Ruritan members, while OMTU member Bill Bezell coordinated the work of OMTU representatives including Perry Rindfleisch, Gary Barrigar, Randall Rogers; and Jamie and Jill Scott (Ron Harrington's daughter and her husband). Ron was unable to attend, but served on the Bristol Chamber's Cleanup Committee this year along with Bill and did a lot of groundwork for the cleanup. We had 43 volunteers register at the Weir Dam, collecting 168 bags of trash. The Bluff City site, led by OMTU member Eddie Hill, registered 22 volunteers and collected 55 bags of trash. Overall, approximately 4460 pounds of trash were collected.

Eleven inmates and two guards from the Sullivan County Community Work Crews gathered 68 bags of trash and 20 large items (including 10 tires) along Hwy 44, with focus on the Chiquapin intersection to Bluff City, an area cleaned only two months ago. Deputy Claude Smith was the work crew supervisor. He has been aggressively pursuing "litter bugs" and recently took several to court. Folks are encouraged to report violators to the Sheriff's Department. Be sure to get a license number for identification.

We must always credit Roger Cox, manager of Cox Disposal, for his gratuitous efforts at trash disposal. He has been helping with the cleanup since OMTU began participating back in 1996.

Most of the trash in South Holston Lake comes from the Middle and South Forks of the Holston River and their tributaries, which originate in Smyth County but flow through Washington County before merging at the upper part of the lake. Over the past five years several Virginia groups have made efforts to bring changes, but with little or no success so far.

