

NEWS CASTER

Overmountain Chapter

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Visit our Web site at omtu.org

Volume 13, Issue 1
January-February,
2008

Happy New Year!!!



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Coming Events

BOD:	01-10-08
Meeting:	01-17-08
TVA Coldwater Meeting:	01-26-08
TNTU Meeting:	01-26-08
BOD:	03-13-08
Meeting:	03-20-08

The January meeting—set for 01-17-08— will be held at the Golden Corral, 3104 Brown's Mill Road, Johnson City. A buffet dinner begins at 6:00 p.m., followed by a short business meeting. The program will be a presentation on the \$45,000 OMTU project to install a new fish barrier on Hampton Creek. This stream enhancement was completed in 2007.

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.

Trout Unlimited Encouraged by Forest Service Decision to Restore Water Quality and Protect Brook Trout in Tellico ORV Area

Maryville, TN/Morganton, NC -- Trout Unlimited expressed cautious optimism about a decision by the U.S Forest Service, announced today (December 19, 2007), that is intended to fix pressing water pollution and brook trout habitat loss caused by poorly managed off-road vehicle use (ORV) in key areas of the Nantahala National Forest. The agency said it will close all ORV trails in the Tellico area for the winter, the worst season of the year for sediment pollution of streams, and will close four badly eroded trail segments for a year.

TU and other conservation groups have been asking the Forest Service to address the problem for years. The conservation groups have had a series of conversations with the agency and ORV users since June when the conservation groups submitted a notice of their intent to sue the Forest Service for violating multiple state and federal water quality laws, and its own regulations. No lawsuit has been filed, although the groups' notice is still pending.

"The positive steps outlined in the decision are badly needed" said Michael "Squeak" Smith, with the North Carolina Council of Trout Unlimited. "We applaud the Forest Service for, at last, listening to our concerns and for taking meaningful steps to address them."

"Brook trout habitat in the Tellico, which has been damaged for years by ORV use in some watersheds, comprises some of the last best habitat for native brook trout in the southeastern region," said George Lane, Chairman of the Tennessee Council of TU. "Agency studies show that streams within the Tellico area receive 500 to 1,000 times more sediment than similar streams just outside the trail system. That is no way to treat such an outstanding, regionally-significant resource, and we believe that the agency's decision today will help us get on the right path to stream restoration," said Lane.

See **Tellico ORV**, page 5

DON'T FORGET TO ORDER YOUR TENNESSEE TROUT UNLIMITED LICENSE PLATE. ORDER FORMS ARE AVAILABLE AT OMTU MEETINGS OR YOU CAN GO ON LINE AND ORDER AT WWW.TUPLATE.ORG. (See President's Corner, page 2)

Lingering drought has mixed effects on area trout streams

By George Grant, Outdoors Columnist, Bristol Herald Courier

2007 is all rolled up and we're starting another year.

Most anglers have their fingers crossed, hoping for more rain and milder temperatures than we saw last year. Those of us that are fans of wild trout worried about the effect of the drought on our favorite mountain streams all through the scorching summer.

With that in mind, I placed a call to Jim Habera, Wild Trout Biologist for Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. For fifteen years Habera has monitored wild trout populations in Tennessee and what he had to say was reassuring—maybe.

"Right now it's not as bad as you think it might be in terms of wild trout abundance," Habera said. "But they are down some."

It's worth noting that for biologists, 'abundance' means the total number of trout of all sizes; anglers tend to apply 'abundance' to catchable fish.

"The young-of-the-year [newly spawned trout] do very well because pretty much the whole stream becomes young-of-the-year habitat. They like low, stable water flows," Habera noted and then he added the kicker,

See **Drought**, page 4

FY 2008 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 Beazell
- Bob Fondry
- Charles Martin

Frequency of OMTU meetings changed for 2008

The OMTU Board has voted to change the frequency of the regular meetings from ten a year to six. The dates for 2008:

January 17
March 20
May 15
July 17
September 18
November 20

The new schedule will also be posted on the OMTU website calendar.

WANT TO BUY OR SELL PROPERTY?

Call Dempsey Shell, Shell & Associates Real Estate, (423) 547-9377. 10% of the net will be donated to OMTU.

President's Corner

By Perry Rindfleisch

Another year is upon us and your Board of Directors has already met to discuss our plans for 2008. We should have another active year as there are several important stream preservation items for our chapter to tackle. I look forward to your input on additional items that should be addressed.

Please feel free to email Ron Harrington at omtuinfo@bvunet.net with any ideas, suggestions or speakers you would like for us to consider this year

The TU license plate issue needs your immediate attention. This is a dynamite way to funnel conservation dollars into your chapter. We will receive \$15 for each license plate our chapter members agree to purchase. In years after 2008 the money will go into a TU state pool of money that can be tapped for special projects.

We have a beautiful design for the plate, one that you will be proud to display on your vehicles, plus a source of funds for our favorite topic, conservation and preservation of our beautiful streams. How can we go wrong with a deal like that?

Either pick up a form at one of our meetings or go online to www.tuplate.org for an application. For the modest fee of \$35 you can do a great deal to help. Please do it now.

If we do not get orders for 1,000 plates by June 30th, this idea will die. Anyone who has paid the \$35 will get their money back in the event we do not get sufficient orders to go into production.

Let's tackle 2008 together.

Perry

Other's Opinion

PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Standing up for the environment isn't an easy thing to do in a region whose history is so entwined with that of the coal industry. But it's a stand we must make if we want to preserve the region's beauty and ensure clean drinking water and breathable air for our children and grandchildren.

On a federal level, we urge Congress not to relax rules that protect streams from mine waste and to rein in the practice of mountaintop removal—strip mining on steroids. In the quest for cheap energy, the ends do not justify the means.

State leaders will grapple with environmental questions this year, as well. We urge them to continue to bring clean drinking water and public sewer service to this region, as the latter will go a long way to improve regional water quality. We urge rejection of Dominion Power Co.'s plan to build a coal-burning power plant in Wise County, and we promise to fight for the cleanup of Appalachian Power Co.'s Carbo plan in Russell County.

Source: "Our View: Substantial challenges ahead in 2008," Opinion page, [Bristol Herald Courier](#), Sunday, January 6, 2008

OMTU VOLUNTEER REPORT FOR 2007 By Randall Rogers, Treasurer

During FY 2007, OMTU members contributed 920 volunteer hours of time towards OMTU projects and activities.

Conservation (restoration, protection or advocacy projects) 550 hrs

Fundraising: 80 hrs

General Operations (newsletter, website, membership management etc.): 125 hrs

Youth Education and Outreach: 40 hrs

General Education and Outreach: 25 hrs

Travel: 100 hrs

Total Volunteer Hours: 920 hrs

The value of the hours, using a Federal guideline of \$18.05 per hour comes to \$16,606.

Thanks to all members who gave of their time and effort this past year.

ROCKY FORK UPDATE

By: Rex Boner, Vice-President, The Conservation Fund

With the holidays now behind us and the start of a new year, our collective efforts to protect the 10,000-acre Rocky Fork tract move forward. In fact, there was a gift under the Rocky Fork Christmas tree, a \$3,100,000 budget item in the recently signed 2008 federal budget! Senator Alexander, Senator Corker, and Representative Davis worked hard to keep this in the budget. In addition to the success in the FY2008 budget, a \$9,000,000 request has been included in the FY2009 budget. If you have an opportunity to send a note thanking these folks, that would be helpful. While this was great news, we still have a big hill to climb to raise the entire \$39,950,000.

Tennessee's Wildlife Resources Agency, one of the project partners, recently submitted a \$3,000,000 proposal to the Enhancement Grant program administered by the Department of Transportation. These funds are available for viewshed protection, a significant benefit of the project. Tennessee's Heritage Conservation Trust Fund has already committed \$6,000,000 towards the project, a significant indication of their support. The Conservation Fund, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy are all working together to also raise private funds. Successful completion of the Rocky Fork project will depend on the financial support from the state and federal governments, and the private sector.

We are also working with local elected officials and others in the local communities to develop economic strategies that can take advantage of the vast array of unique natural resources in the region. Whether you fish, hunt, hike, or simply enjoy being in the woods, the addition of Rocky Fork will enhance the pursuit of these opportunities. I know that members of this Chapter as well as other TU members have been and will continue to be supportive of this important land conservation project. If you are interested in finding out more about information about the project, and how you can specifically help, please contact me at 770-414-0211.

Editor's Note: Special thanks to Carl Silverstein, Executive Director, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, and Ralph Knoll, The Conservation Fund, for assistance in arranging for this update.

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According to a report prepared for the TVA Board, Tom Kilgore, President and CEO, stated that as a result of continuing dry conditions in the Tennessee Valley, TVA's hydroelectric generation – its cheapest source of power – remains significantly below normal for the first few months of the 2008 fiscal year.

Yearly rainfall amounts in the Valley have been below normal for the past four fiscal years and decreasing each year, with the 2007 rainfall at 33 percent below normal. Runoff – the amount of water that reaches the river and reservoirs – was 33 percent and 46 percent below normal in 2006 and 2007, respectively.

As a result, TVA's power generation from hydroelectric plants was 24 percent below normal in 2006, 31 percent below normal in 2007 and 66 percent below normal so far this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1. "When you look at cumulative rainfall totals in the Valley since 2004, each year the rainfall amounts have progressively been worse, culminating with 2007 which was the driest year," Kilgore said. "This lack of rainfall and runoff has led to significantly lower hydro generation the past two years, and we're starting off fiscal year 2008 even lower than the previous two years."

Kilgore offered a few simple things people can do now to reduce energy use, which include:

- Turn down the thermostat in the winter and up in the summer
- Turn off lights and appliances when not in use · Use compact fluorescent lamps
- Make sure there is adequate insulation and weather stripping
- Change heating, ventilation and air conditioning filters regularly
- Use less power between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. during the summer.

Source: TVA News Release, November 29, 2007

TROUT UNLIMITED'S VISION

"By the next generation, Trout Unlimited will ensure that robust populations of native and wild coldwater fish once again thrive within their North American range, so that our children can enjoy healthy fisheries in their home waters."

REPORT LITTER-BUGS!

CALL TDOT AT 1-877-854-8837

- Tn License Plate #
- Type/make of Vehicle
- Date and time of incident
- Location of incident
- Type of litter

REPORT FISH AND GAME 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.

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.

Drought, from page 1

“They just don’t recruit.” ‘Recruit’ is biologist-speak for survive. “They’re going to find trouble with that if we don’t return to normal flows,” Habera added. He also noted that low flows have a negative impact on adult populations.

If we return to normal flows in 2008, we’ll probably see a drop in the numbers of nice fish (that’s angler-speak for we noticed it when we caught it) for a while before the recruits are ready to do battle.

One particular thought had been nagging me throughout the long, hot summer. Most of our native brook trout populations are confined to the smaller streams in the higher elevations. In many of these watersheds, a downstream population of rainbow trout exists that could displace them if the drought seriously impacted their numbers.

“I’m not really worried about that,” Habera said when asked about that possibility. “These droughts actually benefit brook trout. The rainbows do not do well in the summer droughts that we have. I think that in the big picture that may be what enables our brook trout to exist on to the future with them...Our brook trout are better adapted to dealing with these dry summers and low flow years...Every time we hit one of these droughts

Drought, continued

I see rainbow abundance go down and the brook trout abundance go up.”

That was a bit of surprise, but it makes sense. Brook trout have been swimming in our streams since the Ice Age ended 12,000 years ago. That’s more than enough time to get used to conditions. Rainbows have had more than 150 years of residence in the Appalachian Mountains.

Source: Reprinted with permission from the Outdoor Editor, Bristol Herald Courier. George Grant’s column on trout fishing appears in the Outdoor Section each Thursday. George can be reached at ffadvice@aol.com.

Since 1959

“Trout Unlimited’s mission hasn’t changed since its founding in 1959. The most basic tenet of TU’s philosophy—take care of the fish, and the fishing will take care of itself—hasn’t changed either. Today’s organization is one that TU’s founders would know and love: a conservation group, not a fishing club.”

Charles F. Gauvin, TU President

Take a Kid Fishing

More than 90 percent of today’s anglers fish because they were introduced at a young age. Several studies show that a high percentage of children who participate in outdoor activities such as fishing, attending a TU youth camp or participating in Trout in the Classroom programs are much more likely to become conservationists. Pledge to take a child fishing by visiting www.anglerslegacy.org.

Source: Trout, Summer, 2007



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I-81 Coldwaters Area Restoration Effort Underway in Virginia

Carvin Creek, which flows through the verdant campus of Hollins University, is so narrow in places that you can almost step across it.

But this diminutive creek — like scores of streams up and down the Interstate 81 corridor — has a vast effect on the health of Virginia's ailing, big rivers.

So a coalition of conservationists, businesses and state agencies is now targeting these streams to clean up and repopulate with trout.

"Most of these streams have been affected by pollution," said John Ross, chairman of the Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited, which is involved in the project. "Our long-term goal is to work on them to improve water quality and that of our rivers."

The cleanup goal, which may take decades to reach, will focus on the thousands of miles of headwater and spring creeks that flow through the 325-mile I-81 corridor from the West Virginia line north of Winchester to Bristol, Tenn.

The program is called the Interstate 81 Coldwaters Area Restoration Effort. Participants include area chapters of Trout Unlimited — such as the 200-member Roanoke Valley Chapter — Orvis in Roanoke and the state Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

The goal is not only to reduce pollution but also to improve stream flows and to build up populations of wild trout, including the native brook trout. Most of the targeted streams were once clean enough to harbor the brook trout, a good indicator of the health of any stream and of the broader watershed.

The corridor was chosen for restoration because of a recent report by the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, which identified it as having the greatest potential for the restoration of the brook trout. The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture is a collaborative effort by 17 states, including Virginia, to improve fish habitat.

Larry Mohn, fisheries regional manager for Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, said the report "highlighted that the entire valley along I-81 — all the brook trout population has been eliminated.

"We want to clean up the whole watershed," said Mohn, whose agency recommended the project.

Ross said cleanup plans include working with stream landowners to improve their stream's water quality. Fencing cattle out of the streams or planting trees streamside will help the water quality of the creeks. Streams also

would be artificially narrowed to force out sediment, a major problem in spring creeks flowing through farmland.

Source: [The Richmond Times-Dispatch.](#)

Tellico ORV, from page 1

"All recreational users of the Tellico area of the Nantahala should be heartened by the decision today because it is good for the long term sustainability of the Forest's natural resources," said Smith. "Today TU calls on all users of the Tellico ORV area, especially the responsible ORV users of the area, to join us in working with the Forest Service to implement its short term plan, and to develop a long term plan that will yield lasting restoration of Forest's streams and brook trout populations," said Smith.

Source: TU National Web site

Tennessee TU License Plates sales still below targeted numbers

By Dick Davis, President, Cumberland Chapter

I have been very busy putting together our strategy for promoting the TU plate in Jan to March 2008, and I wanted to share each chapter's efforts in getting their members to purchase the TU specialty plate. All chapters have significant room for improvement in communicating and selling the idea of the plate to their members. Somehow the importance of the TU specialty plate and or message is not getting through to our TU members. ***Please remember all monies from plates sold in Year One are returned to the individual chapters.***

The following are some of the actions that we will be taking to meet our goal of selling at least a 1,000 plates by July 1, 2008:

- 1) Article in ***Trout*** Magazine Winter 2008 appearing in Jan 2008 in the Actionline section of the magazine. This will go out to 130,000 TU members nationwide and 2500 TU members in TN.
- 2) Byron Begley of Little River Outfitters Fly Shop in Townsend, TN suggested his shop and others offer a \$10 off coupon with purchase of the TU plate. I worked out the details of the offer and enlisted five fly shops so far to participate. The www.tuplate.org web site will promote sales from Jan 1-March 31, 2008.
- 3) We are finalizing a major advertising effort to reach ***all fisherman*** in Tennessee. I will report on the progress and report on our efforts at the Jan 26, 2008 meeting of the TU TN State Council Meeting in Knoxville, TN.

I welcome all other suggestions and ideas to make the TU plate a reality at our upcoming meeting.

Editor's Note: As of 12/31/07, only 13 plates had been sold in the OMTU area. Assuming one plate per member, this is only 5% of our membership. Purchase your plate today!

Protecting trout & salmon habitats in preparation for future climate change

Trout Unlimited says now is the time to protect the best trout and salmon habitats available in preparation for future climate change. Native trout and salmon in pristine, well-managed places will be in the best possible shape to deal with climate change issues. **The idea is to eliminate or greatly control anything that stresses native trout and salmon populations.**

Below are TU's "Ten Steps to Protecting Trout and Salmon From Climate Change":

1. Protect the diversity of remaining native trout and salmon populations.
2. Restore the natural range of life history strategies in trout populations, including migratory and lake-dwelling forms.
3. Protect springs, headwaters and other sources of cold water.
4. Restore riparian habitats — the native trees and vegetation along streams and rivers — to provide shade.
5. Restore woody debris and boulders in stream channels to create deeper pools.
6. Remove in-stream barriers to fish movement, such as dams and poorly designed culverts.
7. Restore in-stream flows that have been reduced by diversions for irrigation and other purposes.
8. Minimize existing sources of stress, such as pollution, overgrazing, and roads along streams.
9. Limit introductions of non-native fish and control existing populations.
10. Monitor and evaluate habitats as they face

Protecting trout, continued

Climate change.

Global warming may be here, but there are many things we can do about it.

It's time to act. Now.

Source: Trout Unlimited National Web site.

Proposed Northeast TN Water Quality Plan Up for Review & Approval

A draft of the Northeast Tennessee Water Quality BMP Manual for Bristol Tennessee, Johnson City, Tennessee, and Elizabethton, Tennessee is now available for review and comment by the public. The proposed Water Quality BMP (Best Management Practices) Manual will regulate the post construction stormwater quality requirements for developments subject to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements of the Cities and the State.

The basic goal is to reduce the water quality impacts of development by controlling discharges of pollutants such as sedimentation—one of the largest pollutants messing up our streams in Northeast Tennessee. Over 300 miles of streams in the region are deemed as “impaired” due to excessive sedimentation.

The plan calls for a treatment standard of 80% TSS (Total Suspended Solids), which is a “best available technology” standard. This can be reasonably attained by using a two-pronged approach—reduction of pollution by use of natural conservation areas & vegetated buffers; and by requiring that remaining storm-water runoff be treated with structural controls such as wet basins, sand filters and wet lands.

A public hearing was held on December 3, 2007 in Johnson City, but comments from the public are still being accepted. The next step is for the respective cities to approve the plan for implementation. For more information, go to www.bristoltn.org/engineering.cfm.

2008 East Tennessee Environmental Conference is set for March 18-19 at the Meadowview Conference Center, Kingsport. You can register by going to www.tnenvironment.com. For a look at the agenda, go to www.tnenvironment.com/draft2008program.pdf

More about this important and interesting conference in the March Issue.