

The Flyline



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Randy Buchanan Tribute

by Len Lichvar

The Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited (MLTU) lost its President, and the world lost a staunch natural resource conservationist with the passing of Randy Buchanan on June 30, 2022. Randy was a life-time member of Trout Unlimited and, during his 30 years as President of MLTU, the chapter received local, state and national recognition.

MLTU was awarded the Silver Trout Award by National Trout Unlimited in 1999 and twice received the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited's Edward Urbas Outstanding Chapter Award under Randy's tenure. These recognitions were derived from the chapter's long time successful coldwater conservation projects and support of countless natural resource enhancements in Cambria, Somerset and Bedford Counties. Randy was recognized by PATU with the Doc Fritchey Award as the Outstanding Volunteer Coldwater Conservationist in the state in 2018. He also twice received the Order of the Mug Award from MLTU as the chapter's most outstanding member.

Randy was a founding member and served for many years as President of the Yellow Creek Coalition that has worked to enhance angling opportunities and water quality in the Yellow Creek watershed in Bedford County.

Randy was also well known as professional fly tyer and fly tying instructor and demonstrated and taught his skills at national fly fishing shows across the country, as well as at countless local and state events. His angling and tying skills, as well as his signature fly patterns such as



Photo of Randy by Len Lichvar

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his Buchanan Stonefly Nymph, were profiled in many local, state and national outdoor magazines, newspapers, videos and other publications such as books authored by Charlie Meck and Ann McIntosh, as well as the multi-authored book Keystone Fly Fishing.

His passion for angling was only surpassed by his drive and desire to protect and improve water quality and preserve the natural environment.

Growing up and living in southwestern Pennsylvania, Randy saw firsthand how the degradation of natural resources negatively impacted not only recreational opportunities, but how it impaired the economy and quality of life of the residents. He voluntarily led many of the efforts that have now reversed much of that trend and his legacy will live forever within the confines of that unselfish and noble role.



Randy shares his love of clean water with students.

Photos by Melissa Reckner.

It's Time for All of Us to Step Up

by Gary Cooper

Each of us has had time to process the great loss that the chapter has suffered. Not only have we lost the leadership of Randy Buchanan, but his wife, Pat, will not be continuing on as treasurer.

I want every member of this chapter to stop and think. Ask yourself, “What can I do to help?” We particularly need a new treasurer. Pat will help by teaching the new treasurer what exactly must be done. Shane Rudnik has done a fine job in place of Randy, but Shane is very busy and will not be able to take over the presidency on a long-term basis. We need someone to step up and serve as president.

We would like to have as many younger people as possible, and we would also like to encourage more women to get involved in the chapter. We can use fresh leadership and ideas. Consider running for a position on the board of directors. Come to a meeting. See what we're about.

For thirty years the chapter rolled along smoothly, but many members are getting long-in-the-tooth.

“What can I do to help?” It's up to you! Step up!

It is time to start thinking about the chapter's upcoming spring fundraising banquet. Mark this date down on your calendars: the annual banquet will be held on **Saturday, March 25, 2023** at the Holiday Inn in Downtown Johnstown. This is our big fundraiser of the year. Most of the money raised here goes directly to stream projects for that year. As usual, we will have raffles, restaurant prizes, baskets, ladies prizes, silent auctions, and special prizes.

Sadly, we will greatly miss our longtime president, Randy Buchanan.

So save your money and be sure to save the date. You are invited to the banquet. In honor of Randy, let's make this banquet the best one yet!



Fly Tying Season Begins Again in January

by Gary Cooper

Those of you who would like to learn to tie flies, as well as those who would like to take our beginning fly tying course again to sharpen your basic skills, please take notice of this article. MLTU will offer beginning fly tying classes on Monday evenings or on Saturday mornings in January and February.

These classes are free to anyone interested. Both tools and materials will be provided to the students. All classes will be held at the Richland Township Municipal Building located at 322 Schoolhouse Road.

Monday night classes will begin on January 16th and will continue on January 23rd, January 30th, February 6th, February 13th, and February 20th. Class hours are 6:30 p.m. till 9:00 p.m.

Saturday morning classes will begin on January 14th and will continue on January 21st, January 28th, February 4th, February 11th, and February 18th. Class hours are from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m.

February 25th is an event called "Pies and Flies." On this day, students are invited to come watch instructors tie or they may tie themselves. The "Pies" part of the day is when everyone has pizza. If you are interested in one of these classes, call me at 814-266-4763. If I do not answer, leave a message which includes your name, phone number, and an e-mail address.

Our classes are enjoyable and can provide you with a lifetime hobby. Imagine catching a fish on a fly that you tied yourself! Sign up now.



Editor's note: The STREAM Act is a proposed federal law that would allow states to set aside up to 30% of the abandoned mine reclamation funds already allocated to coal-producing states for the creation of trusts, which are critical to funding the long-term operation, maintenance and replacement of vital AMD treatment systems. The following is a letter Len wrote, with MLTU's support, to Pennsylvania Senator Pat Toomey, who has not yet supported this proposal.

Dear Senator Toomey,

The Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited (MLTU) is based out of Johnstown, PA and has supported abandoned mine drainage (AMD) abatement projects in the Cambria-Somerset region for decades. The efforts to restore the water quality of the Stonycreek River watershed have been successful to the point that over 20 miles of fishery has been restored. In addition, a nationally recognized whitewater destination point has been created. Clean water is now not only available for recreation, but for business and industry as well. All of which has created an economic revival and eco-tourism industry in our region as well as an improved quality of life for all citizens.

However, operation and maintenance of these AMD treatment systems, which are actually essential infrastructure facilities, has been challenging. There are 24 AMD treatment systems in the Stonycreek River watershed and understaffed and underfunded organizations such as the Somerset Conservation District and small volunteer watershed organizations are charged with perpetually maintaining them.

The federal Safeguarding Treatment for the Restoration of Ecosystems from Abandoned Mines Act (STREAM Act S.3957) will enable funds that have already been allocated for AMD projects to be utilized for the empowerment of essential long term operation and maintenance.

MLTU strongly recommends that you support and vote in favor of this legislation which is now up for consideration in the U. S. Senate.



U.S. Senator Bob Casey.

Photo by Melissa Reckner

U.S. Senator Robert Casey (D-PA) speaks at the Oven Run AMD Treatment Re-dedication ceremony on September 1 at Oven Run Site D located in Shade Township, Somerset County and touched on how important the STREAM Act is for continued revitalization. He and U.S. Senator Mike Braun (R-IN) introduced this bipartisan legislation.

Other elected officials and representatives of state and federal agencies and local conservation groups also spoke at the event to commemorate the reconstruction of the Oven Run AMD Treatment Systems on the Stonycreek River. The Somerset Conservation District sponsored the event and also was responsible for the successful reconstruction of four of the systems while the PA Department of Environmental Protection completed the reconstruction of the fifth site. A lunch and a tour of Site D was provided to the attendees at the conclusion of the ceremony.

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12 Days of Christmas Tickets

by Gary Cooper



The tickets for the Twelve Days of Christmas will be printed soon. As soon as they are organized, we will be sending them out to members. We sell 500 tickets, so it is important that we sell all of the tickets. Each ticket costs \$5.00 and has two numbers for the daily number of the Pennsylvania lottery. Please sell the tickets given to you or buy them yourself. We use these funds to operate the chapter. Twelve people will win. Return all stubs and checks or money to me by Friday, **November 25, 2022**. Sell those tickets!

Cambria Co. Federation of Sportsmen's Club

by Tony Mirilovich, Jr.

The Cambria County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Inc. is in dire need to fill in the leadership positions of President, Secretary, and Vice President in their upcoming elections this fall. According to a letter issued to its members by Treasurer, George Spisak, the group has not had a secretary in three years and both the president and vice-president are having health issues that limit their participation. As with most organizations, they are eager for new people to join, take leadership roles, share new ideas, and help the group advance their technology. There are six clubs in the federation and more than 1,000 members.

Meetings have been at the Jackson Township Community Sportsmen's Club on Route 22, about 4 miles west of Mundy's Corner. Anyone interested in filling these roles may contact George at 814-535-1474 or me at 814-255-2187 or at tonyjr99@yahoo.com. Thank you.

The Somerset Conservation District has completed four significant water quality and fish habitat improvement projects this year. The Quemahoning Tailwater fish habitat project is actually the third phase of projects completed several years ago in the 1.3 mile stretch of Quemahoning Creek below the Quemahoning Reservoir.

This phase, located on Cambria-Somerset Authority (CSA) property, is by far the largest effort and includes the placement of tons of rock as well as multiple fish habitat structures all designed to provide additional holding locations for fish and wood addition to improve aquatic insect populations. The funding for the project was secured through federal AML Pilot funds contracted through the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds.

Also funded through the Pilot funds is a streamside buffer project that has added nearly 1,000 trees to a wild trout tributary to the Quemahoning Reservoir. The project is located in Conemaugh Township, Somerset County and is in cooperation with two farm landowners who also contributed their own time and equipment to plant the trees.

In cooperation with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC), the District designed and implemented a large wood fish

habitat project on Higgins Run, a Class A wild trout water and tributary to the Quemahoning Reservoir. The WPC provided the professionally trained staff to accomplish this project which was constructed on CSA property. The funding was secured through the District's Quemahoning Creek Trust Fund.

The District also completed another phase of the South Fork Bens Creek fish habitat project which adds to the previous District projects on the stream in the recent past.

The project was a mitigation project funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. The South Fork already has several sections designated as Class A wild trout water and this project may well expand the growing population of wild trout



Professionally trained Western Pennsylvania Conservancy staff members interlock and secure wood addition in Higgins Run. Photo by Len Lichvar.

in the waterway.

This aggressive and successful agenda of coldwater conservation projects were developed and managed by District Watershed Specialist Greg Shustrick. These initiatives significantly add to the ongoing coldwater conservation efforts that have enabled the region to increase its already growing reputation as an angling destination point and continue to increase the positive economic impacts that are derived from it.

The Stewart Run habitat improvement project, phase one, was completed on Saturday, August 27th. Stewart Run is a headwater tributary to the South Branch of Blacklick Creek. The work site is situated on State Game Lands #79, one and a half miles west of the Route 219, Route 22 intersection. Access is from Route 22 West using an abandoned trolley right of way that is gated.

Phil Thomas of PA Trout Unlimited planned and drew up the design layout.

Blacklick Valley School District utilizes this location for their Trout in the Classroom releases, which is the compelling reason for stabilizing this section of the stream.

Hemlock logs selected from the game lands were acquired and pre-positioned on Friday, August 19th. Four log-framed stone deflectors and a log cross vane were placed within approximately 160 feet of the stream bed. Earth Shapers was the contractor, and a large track hoe and a rock truck with a pivoting dump bed along with Butch Kerchenske's track hoe were utilized. Twenty logs and 40 tons of #5 rock were the primary components employed for the project. The limbs from the felled hemlocks were placed inside the log deflectors and then "buried" under the rock as it was positioned. Other materials included rebar – to anchor the logs in the streambed – grass seed, and mulch to repair the disturbed areas.

The total budget for phase one was \$5,000, which included the permit fees. Funds permitting, phase two, immediately downstream of phase one, is scheduled for 2023, and phase three in 2024.

A grilled picnic lunch was prepared and enjoyed by all the workers.

Special thanks to Butch Kerchenske for coordinating this enterprise and Mike Lepley of Earth Shapers, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, along with all volunteers that came out to help.

Job well done!



*Photos of the Stewart Run work day
by Dave Wright.*



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Save the Dates!

- ◆ Oct 6 — MLTU Meeting @ Richland Municipal Bldg., Board 6:30 PM; Membership 7 PM
- ◆ Oct 19 — 1st Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM, likely at Dave Maher's house
- ◆ Nov 3 — MLTU Meeting @ Richland Municipal Bldg., Board 6:30 PM; Membership 7 PM
- ◆ Nov 16 — Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM, likely at Dave Maher's house
- ◆ Nov 25 — Deadline to return Twelve Days of Christmas tickets to Gary
- ◆ Dec 1 — MLTU Meeting @ Richland Municipal Bldg., Board 6:30 PM; Membership 7 PM
- ◆ Dec 6 — MLTU newsletter submission deadline, 4 PM. Submit materials to Missy.
Newsletter covers January 1 - March 31, 2023.
- ◆ See page 3 for fly tying class dates
- ◆ January 18 — Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM
- ◆ February 15 — Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM
- ◆ Feb 25 — Pies and Flies
- ◆ March 15 — Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM
- ◆ March 22 — Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM
- ◆ Mar 25 — Annual Fund Raising Banquet at the Holiday Inn, downtown Johnstown