

The Flyline



A publication of Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited

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Volume 61, Issue 67

President's Message

by Dave Maher

Greetings.

First of all, I'd like to thank everyone in the chapter for making the first six months of the presidency look very easy. The chapter has accomplished a lot this summer. We completed the Phase Two of Stewarts Run in August and completed the Yellow Creek project the first week in September. Thank you to everyone that helped. The projects were well attended!

The Banquet Committee held a meeting on September 12, 2023 and, with some discussion, decided that the 2024 banquet will be held at a new venue. Please mark your calendar for **March 23, 2024**. The new venue will be the brand new WILLOW on Airport Road in Johnstown. We hope to make next year's banquet the best yet.

Fall is coming fast, so get out and enjoy a day on a stream.

As my old friend Randy would say, "Catch one!"

Tight lines,

Dave

MLTU Board Members

President: Dave Maher

Vice President: Shane Rudnik

Treasurer: Pat Buchanan

Secretary: Eric Fabrizio

Jeff Baird

Gary Cooper

Adam Cotchen

Butch Kerchenske

Melissa Reckner

Dave Wright

MLTU's Annual Fundraising

Banquet will be

Saturday, March 23, 2024

at The Willow

650 Airport Road

Johnstown, PA 15904



A wild brown trout captured during a recent electro-fishing survey of the Class A wild trout section of the South Fork of Bens Creek. Photo by Len Lichvar.

An electro-fishing survey was conducted in early July on the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC) designated Class A wild brown trout section of the South Fork of Bens Creek in Somerset County. The survey was done by staff from Garrett College of Maryland and coordinated by the Somerset Conservation District. The survey was conducted to determine baseline fish data in advance of a PFBC designed and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy requested Growing Greener Grant funded stream improvement project to be constructed in the Class A section.

The survey documented a thriving and healthy multiple age class population of wild brown trout within the three-mile long Class A section which was designated Class A wild trout water by the PFBC in 2018. Because of this designation, stocking of hatchery trout in this section by way of PFBC management policy was to cease; however, due to communication failure within the PFBC, stocking continued until the PFBC Bureau of Fisheries Management was contacted by MLTU in 2023 requesting that the Commission's policy of no stocking be implemented. A full documented report of the fish population data will be completed in the near future.

Storage Unit *by Dave Wright*

The chapter has rented a 10 x 10 storage unit to house all of its tools and materials in a central location. Members will no longer have to use personal garage and shed space to store the chapter's various possessions. Thanks to Shane Rudnik for taking the lead on this and for obtaining a metal cabinet, heavy-duty shelving, and floor pallets. Also, thanks to Butch Kerchenske for building a custom shelf fitted to the unit, for obtaining floor pallets, and for supplying a lock. If any members have chapter property, contact an officer if you want it relocated to the storage facility.

Take a Kid Fishing



*"They will enjoy it and so will you."
Luca Bahorik and his father, Brian, fishing on local farm ponds. Photo from Dave Wright.*

This project will stabilize an eroding streambank and improve in-stream habitat on section of the South Fork Bens Creek, located in Conemaugh Township, Somerset County. This section of South Fork Bens Creek is designated as a High-Quality Cold Water Fishery (HQ-CWF) and supports a Class A wild brown trout population. This project will restore approximately 1,365 feet of streambank on publicly-accessible stream located on property owned by Charles George, formally a church picnic grove. A total of 22 log and rock devices are planned to be installed according to PFBC standard drawings. These fish habitat enhancement structures include deflectors and vanes that will create more centralized stream flows, increase scour pools and overhead cover, and stabilize the eroding banks. This project will not only improve in-stream habitat for aquatic organisms, but also reduce nutrient and sediment loads to Bens Creek, a popular trout stream.



Adam Cotchen of the Western PA Conservancy and MLTU, Chuck George, and Drew King of PFBC Bureau of Habitat Management Stream Division go over the draft design for the proposed stream improvement project on Chuck's section of the Class A wild trout section of the South Fork of Bens Creek. Adam will be submitting a Growing Greener grant for funding of the project. Photo by Len Lichvar.

Fly Tying Classes 2024

Next year's free fly-tying classes will be held at the Richland Municipal Building tentatively on Saturday mornings at 9 a.m. beginning January 13 until February 17 and Monday evenings at 6 p.m. from January 15 through February 12. Tools and materials will be provided, but if you have your own, bring them.

The "Pies and Flies" event that features local tyers giving hands-on demonstrations will be Saturday, February 17 at 9 a.m.

Registration is required by calling Gary Cooper at 814-266-4763.

Flies for Kids

Children are always delighted, when MLTU does a fly-tying demonstration or education program, to take a fly home with them. If you have any flies that didn't turn out quite the way you wished when you were tying them or you just would like to donate some to this effort, please give them to Dave Wright.

Most recently, MLTU participated in the Kids Fishing Derby at Lake Stonycreek with a fly fishing display and demonstration, which intrigued a lot of young people, and MLTU has a lot more outreach opportunities in 2024!

Stewarts Run

Stewarts Run is a headwater tributary to the South Branch of Blacklick Creek. It is a Class A Wild Brook Trout stream with a healthy population of wild brook trout. The PA Fish and Boat Commission also stocks a portion of the stream.

MLTU has completed stream improvement work on Stewarts Run, which is situated on State Game Lands #79, 2.1 miles west of the Route 219/Route 22 interchange. Access is from Route 22 west to a parking lot on SGL 79, then along an abandoned trolley line that parallels the stream.

Utilizing donations and funds from the 2023 BHE GT&S mini grant program, which is administered by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Phase Two of the Stewarts Run stream improvement project was completed on August 19th and focused on bolstering the stream banks to counteract erosion and diminish sedimentation.

To address these issues, the restoration team employed a combination of materials that included logs, root wads, and rocks. These materials were strategically placed to support and protect the stream's banks. Logs were collected and positioned along with creating access corridors for the heavy equipment on August 17th, while all of the stone had been delivered over the previous few weeks. Thanks to Rocky Geibig of East Hills Enterprises for transporting approximately 72 tons of stone from a property in Windber owned by Bill Dressick, who donated the stone. The team also planted grass seed to stabilize the soil near the stream and surrounding areas.

Three pieces of equipment were employed: Mike Lepley from Earth Shapers had a large track hoe and a rock truck, and Butch Kerchenske had his track hoe. Log diverters and mud sill were installed, all backed and reinforced with rock. In addition, the log cross vane that was installed with Phase One in 2022 was improved by adding more rock and placement of large rocks in the middle of the stream. Volunteers assisted with drilling and pinning the logs and reseeded and mulched the disturbed areas upon completion of the work.

The work crew enjoyed a grilled lunch during a short break.

This entire effort showcased an outstanding display of teamwork. Numerous volunteers from MLTU, including chapter officers Dave Maher, Shane Rudnik, and Eric Fabrizio, joined forces with regional experts like Adam Cotchen from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and J.J. Zielinski, Stream Restoration Technician from the Trout Unlimited national office. A total of 14 volunteers from Mountain Laurel and Fort Bedford Chapters were there to assist. Special thanks to Butch for coordinating this project – and providing the lunch!

This year's project came in under budget as the stone and the charges for delivering the stone were donated. All together, these contributions will give us a great head start for Phase Three to be completed next year.

This level of teamwork is an excellent example of the success that occurs when local volunteers, regional experts, and national-level support unite. A huge “thank you” goes out to all who participated.

Enjoy the photos of the project on the next page.

by Matt Hughes, Butch Kerchenske and Dave Wright



At left, Eric Fabrizio and Shane Rudnik set rebar while Dave Wright reseeds the project site. Photos by Matt Hughes.



*Additional Stewart Run work photos
from Shane Rudnik.*



Yellow Creek Musselman Project

by Dave Wright

On Friday September 8th, work was completed at the Musselman/Koontz properties along Yellow Creek in Bedford County. Log diverters and rock were placed in the stream. The disturbed areas were reseeded and mulched with straw, while three discarded tires were removed from the stream.

Eight Trout Unlimited volunteers from Fort Bedford and Mountain Laurel Chapters were on hand to do the work. Earth Shapers was contracted for the heavy equipment, and Rylan Schnably from the Bedford County Conservation District was the “foreman” for the day.

Logs and rock used were delivered to the site a month prior to the work day. Also, it was determined that more rock would be needed, and it was ordered and delivered that day. A few logs were not used and will need to be relocated at some future date. A streamside, grilled lunch was prepared and enjoyed. Thanks to all that helped!



*Yellow Creek work photos
by Dave Wright.*



Beaver Exclosure

by Dave Wright

On July 29th chapter members assisted Greg Shustrick of the Somerset Conservation District to install fencing at the Oven Run-Site D in an effort to prevent beavers from clogging the outflow from the final pond. Time will tell if the beavers are discouraged.

The unique but recognizable call of the reclusive Whippoorwill always resounded out of otherwise quiet shadows along the trail that Frank Bendick and I traversed for years after finishing up a late night of fishing the Green Drake mayfly hatch on Clear Shade Creek. Frank travelled the trails and fished the waters of Clear Shade for 70 years until he recently passed at the age of 94. He also fished multiple other waters across Pennsylvania, Maryland and the western United States.

Frank was a military veteran who used the GI Bill to attend college and became the decades long metal shop instructor at Jenner-Boswell and North Star High School. Residing in Boswell he, along with his wife, raised three children who also have gone on to successful professional careers in the local area.

However, it was his love and never ending interest and passion in the outdoor pursuits of angling and hunting that propelled him to instantly recognizable and legendary status among Somerset County sportsmen of his generation.

It was his mastery of skill sets, honed from practical experience in the art of fly tying and the sport of fly fishing, which set him apart from his peers. It was during his early years on Clear Shade where he first saw fish rising and chasing natural flies. The trout had little interest in his live bait and artificial lures so he set about learning all he could about this mysterious happenstance and back then a little practiced method called fly fishing that he unravel with ingenuity and trial and error.

Not only did he unearth the clues to successfully fooling fish with his own tied flies, he actually improved and reinvented the way dry flies were constructed that remains unique to the fly tying world to this day. Frank innovatively created a technique that used finely clipped buoyant deer hair for the fly's body rather than the traditional fur or synthetics that absorb water. His new utilization of a long standard tying material significantly improved the fish catching rate of the many fly patterns he then was able to create. Frank was as much a part of Clear Shade Creek's angling lore and legend as anybody.

Frank's tying technique eventually was nationally recognized in *Fly Fisherman* magazine and in the book *Keystone Fly Fishing*. His angling and tying exploits were also published statewide, regionally and locally. Frank was often a guest at outdoor group meetings and fly tying shows where he demonstrated



Randy Buchanan and Frank Bendick.
Photo by Len Licvhar.

his tying techniques and readily gave flies away to anyone who displayed an interest. Although Frank respected and honored the past, he was always focused on the present and the future, striving to learn something new himself and share that knowledge with others.

Frank's passing coincided with the annual one week a year emergence of the Green Drakes on Clear Shade. I arrived on the stream in time for the flies to hit the water's surface that creates a feeding frenzy for the subsurface predators. I knotted an original Bendick deer hair dry fly and, without hesitation, a Clear Shade brown trout inhaled it, as countless numbers of fish had done in the past. Soon after in the moonlit darkness, I walked out on the trail while the unmistakable song of the Whippoorwill yet again pierced the silence of the night.



**Mountain Laurel
Trout Unlimited**

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Johnstown, PA 15904



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Save the Dates!

- ◆ Oct. 5 — MLTU Meeting @ Richland Municipal Bldg., Board 6:30 PM; Membership 7 PM
- ◆ Oct. 18 — Banquet Committee Meeting @ Dave Maher's House, 6:30 PM
- ◆ Nov. 2 — MLTU Meeting @ Richland Municipal Bldg., Board 6:30 PM; Membership 7 PM
- ◆ Nov. 15 — Banquet Committee Meeting @ Dave Maher's House, 6:30 PM
- ◆ Nov. 28 — MLTU newsletter submission deadline, 4 PM. Submit materials to Missy.
Newsletter covers January 1 - March 30, 2024.
- ◆ Dec. 7 — MLTU Meeting @ Richland Municipal Bldg., Board 6:30 PM; Membership 7 PM
- ◆ Dec. 20 — Banquet Committee Meeting @ Dave Maher's House, 6:30 PM

*Happy
holidays*

