

The Flyline



A publication of Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited

July 2024

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President's Message

by Dave Maher

It has been a busy Spring! Mountain Laurel Chapter held its Spring Banquet in March, and I'm proud to report it was the most successful ever! Thank you to everyone that helped make this year's event so good.

The TIC program held its releases in May. The schools that collaborated with MLTU were Shanksville-Stonycreek, Shade-Central City, Richland, Blacklick Valley, and Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Thank you Missy, Adam, and everyone that helped make the TIC program successful. We can always use a little more help with TIC.

Thank you Dave Wright for organizing MLTU's participation in the Windber Fishing Rodeo. We had one hundred ninety five kids participate this year; well done!

In July, we will continue the phase three work on Stewart's Run. The work is scheduled for July 20. If you are looking for something interesting to do, please come out and give us a hand. We can use the extra help.

On June 27 and July 18, MLTU will be represented at the Pittsburgh Zoo's International Conservation Center in Fairhope, which is where the zoo keeps elephants. We will demonstrate fly tying and macros. If you'd like to help, please reach out to me or Dave Wright.

Have a nice summer and go out and enjoy the water.

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

Litter Cleanup Summary

by Melissa Reckner

Several members of Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited worked together to collect dozens of bags of litter from roadways and streams in key watersheds, including Bens Creek, Clear Shade Creek, and Little Paint Creek. Sadly, litter is a pervasive problem, and we welcome more help on our cleanup days to beautify our region and protect wildlife. Thank you to all who worked for hours making our world much cleaner and a little brighter!



Above, MLTU members pose for photos after the litter cleanup in the Clear Shade Creek watershed.

Below left, MLTU members at the Bens Creek litter cleanup.

Below right, some MLTU members at the Little Paint Creek watershed cleanup.



"Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together."

- Vincent Van Gogh

Once again, our chapter participated at the Windber Sportsman's Kids fishing rodeo held on Saturday, June 1, at the club grounds in Ogletown. There were 192 kids registered. It was a beautiful day. We demonstrated fly tying and had a sampling of macroinvertebrates explaining to the kids that you start with cold, clean water to support a food base of "bugs" that the fish then eat. As fly fishers, we tie flies that imitate the natural insects to fool and catch the fish. A young man that had attended our fly-tying class this past winter was our featured tyer. A large crayfish along with a large crane fly larva were popular attractions with the kids challenging each other to "pick it up." Many parents and grandparents thanked us for being there. Many thanks to everyone who helped.

This summer, the Chapter has committed to participate at a youth summer camp program being held at the International Conservation Center in the Fairhope area of Somerset County. This is the property that the Pittsburgh Zoo uses to house elephants. Representatives from the I.C.C. had attended the NatureWorks program at the Bottle Works in March and liked our presentation. We will be tying flies and displaying macroinvertebrates.



Above, children line the pond at the Windber Sportsmen's Club. Photo courtesy the Club's Facebook page.



Left, a young man who participated in MLTU's free fly tying classes this winter demonstrates how to tie a fly at the rodeo. Photo by Dave Wright.

Celebrating Another TIC Year

This year, Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited, in partnership with Brandywine Conservancy / Penguin Court and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, worked with the following six schools in Cambria and Somerset counties on the Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program. MLTU had 193 students, in grades 3-12, participate in Release Day activities.

- ◆ Blacklick Valley High
- ◆ Divine Mercy Catholic Academy – East
- ◆ Divine Mercy Catholic Academy – West
- ◆ Richland Elementary
- ◆ Shade-Central City High
- ◆ Shanksville-Stonycreek Elementary.

MLTU has supported TIC in local schools since the inception of TIC in Pennsylvania 18 years ago! TIC allows school students to raise trout from eggs in a classroom aquarium, while learning about the importance of coldwater resources, healthy riparian buffers, and so much more. Before the end of the school year, students release their surviving trout into a state-approved body of water. TIC is not meant to be a stocking program, but rather one that regularly engages students in conservation topics to create informed stewards.

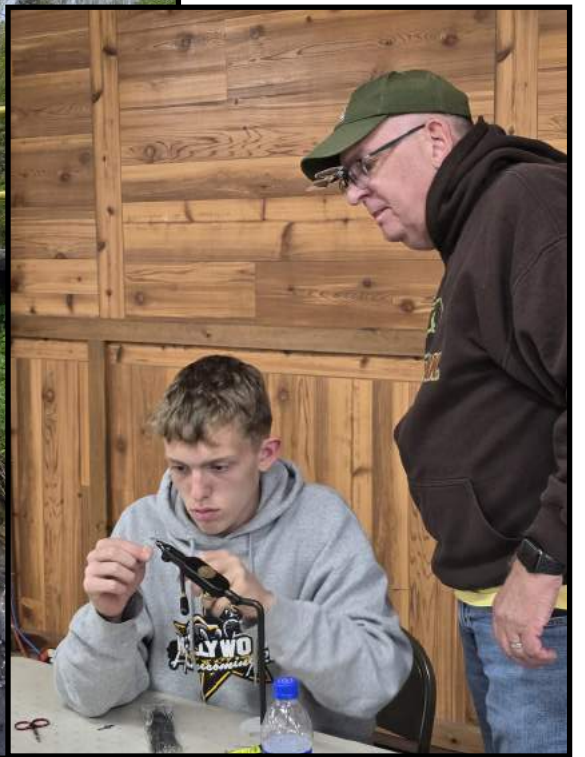
Schools' release day activities would not be possible without the support of MLTU's partners, who lead hands-on activities to strengthen students' knowledge and make for a memorable field day. MLTU thanks the following groups for their assistance this year.

- ◆ Blue Knob State Park (Shade)
- ◆ Brandywine Conservancy / Penguin Court (all)
- ◆ Cambria County Conservation District (Blacklick)
- ◆ Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (Shanksville, Divine Mercy)
- ◆ Pennsylvania Master Naturalist (Shade, Blacklick, Divine Mercy)
- ◆ Shade Creek Watershed Association (Shade)
- ◆ Somerset Conservation District (Shanksville)
- ◆ Stonycreek Conemaugh River Improvement Project (Richland)
- ◆ Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (all)

MLTU also appreciates the following organizations that allow Release Day activities to take place on their property.

- ◆ D&J Golf Haven
- ◆ Greater Ferndale Sportsmen's Association
- ◆ Pennsylvania Game Commission
- ◆ Shade Sportsmen's Club
- ◆ Windber Sportsmen's Association

Photos clockwise from top left, students at Divine Mercy Catholic Academy East release rainbow trout into Bens Creek at D&J Golf Haven. MLTU Vice-President and Blacklick Valley teacher, Shane Rudnik nets fingerlings for his students. MLTU Board Member, Jeff Baird, oversees a Shade-Central City student as he ties a fly. Richland Elementary students release their trout into an Unnamed Tributary at the Windber Sportsmen's Club. Photos by Melissa Reckner.



The Stonycreek River experienced two unexpected potential water quality impairments recently, along with another close call.

On April 16, 2024 a large, but not long lasting surge of Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD), broke lose along Franklin Street in suburban Johnstown. The surge inundated the street and adjacent properties with iron-laden water. Some of it did make into the river, but since it completely subsided later in the day, and the Stonycreek was extremely high, little to no impact to the river could be detected.

The second episode occurred on April 26, 2024 when something gave way along a steep hillside overlooking the Stonycreek River in Hollsopple. This event was initially observed and reported by SCRIP board member, Malcolm Crittenden, when he saw a plume of discolored water in the Stonycreek near Foustwell. He back tracked the discoloration to its source along State Route 601 in Hollsopple.

Malcolm notified me that evening, through text and phone calls. I arrived at the site just before dusk in time to see an estimated thousand-gallon per minute discharge of water entering the Stonycreek River. I was able to use the PA DEP Pollution Hotline and provided the respondent with information and photos.

The next morning, Saturday, my son, Logan Lichvar, and I met at the site where, through his expertise as the AMD Treatment Manager for InnoH2O, was able to obtain an accurate pH reading on the flow. It turned out to be an alkaline level of 6.9. He also took water samples.

Shortly after Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (PA DEP BAMR) Manager, Pat Webb, arrived on the scene to investigate. Through Pat's efforts, other DEP officials were notified as well as representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). There was clearly a weakening of the highway above the discharge that seemed to be caused by it. PennDOT officials arrived and later closed that portion of State Route 601 to traffic out of caution. Dave Thomas of the PA DEP District Mining Office also arrived and indicated the he would further investigate the source.

Later in the day, the flow of water dramatically decreased. Also, the water sample collected by InnoH2O was confirmed to not contain any iron or aluminum indicating the flow was primarily laden with sediment. The PA DEP continues to investigate the cause.



*The sediment-laden discharge in Hollsopple.
Photo by Len Lichvar.*

Continued under "Stonycreek" on page 3

The Johnstown *Tribune-Democrat* published the following editorial on June 5, 2024.

Fishing was pipe dream, now a reality

Growing up in Cambria City, I always dreamed of a time when the Conemaugh River would be clean and pristine for recreational purposes.

Finally, a few short years ago, this dream became a reality.

Everyone in this area owes a debt of gratitude to Len Lichvar, district manager, and Greg Shustrick, watershed specialist for the Somerset Conservation District.

These gentlemen, along with a host of conservation experts and community groups, are responsible for the beauty of the streams and rivers in Somerset and Cambria counties.

Our local streams hadn't been habitable for many decades, but now are teaming with fish and other wildlife.

My husband and I enjoy fishing in our neighborhood, and the Stonycreek River and Bens Creek are two of the streams that have been rehabbed by the above-mentioned individuals.

Fishing in Cambria City was a pipe dream, now a reality.

Businesses and clubs – such as Coal Tubin' – now thrive, while canoe clubs and

kayakers from around the country enjoy the clean, clear water of the rivers in our area.

Get off the couch from in front of the screens and enjoy the great outdoors.

We should be so thankful for citizens who share their passion for the outdoors with thousands of others.

JANET LORD
JEROME

“Stonycreek” continued from page 2

In addition, another possible worst case scenario was averted when Somerset Conservation District Watershed Specialist Greg Shustrick realized that the construction company replacing a Conemaugh Township Water Authority water line along the South Fork of Bens Creek did not have the Lion Mining AMD treatment system’s pipeline on their construction maps.

The Conservation District’s Erosion and Sedimentation Technician, Keith Largent, met with the company to inform them of the missing information, and PA DEP was later able to provide the water line location.

Had that high pressure line, comprised of AMD water, been compromised during the excavation process, a disaster of major consequence would have occurred to the South Fork of Bens Creek as well as downstream into the Stonycreek River.

These are all recent examples of how close we are to losing much of what we have gained. There have been other similar issues in the past. Because of the vigilance of SCRIP and public professional agencies such as the Somerset Conservation District and PA DEP, we have largely avoided disaster – so far.

**Mountain Laurel
Trout Unlimited**

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Save the Dates!

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- ◆ July 11 — MLTU Meeting @ Richland Municipal Bldg., Board 6:30 PM; Membership 7 PM
 - ◆ July 18 — MLTU education program at ICC; Contact Dave Wright for details at 814-442-0248
 - ◆ July 20 — Stewart Run Work Day, 7 AM
 - ◆ Aug. 1 — MLTU Meeting @ Richland Municipal Bldg., Board 6:30 PM; Membership 7 PM
 - ◆ Sept. 5 — MLTU Meeting @ Richland Municipal Bldg., Board 6:30 PM; Membership 7 PM
 - ◆ Sept. 10 — MLTU newsletter submission deadline, 4 PM. Submit materials to Missy.
Newsletter covers October 1 - December 30, 2024.

"The two best times to fish is when it's raining and when it ain't."

- Patrick F. McManus