

The Backcast

Fall 2015



May the holes in
your net be no larger
than the fish in it!

- Irish Proverb

There is no greater
fan of fly fishing
than the worm.

Fish when you can
and while you're still
able. Trout do not
rise in the cemetery.

-Sparse Grey Hackle

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our first meeting of the year will be on Thursday, October 15th beginning at 5:30. The location is the same as last year - The Bass Water Grill on Route 8 in Cheshire. We really like the BWG. The folks there are always accommodating and the food is good.

The social hour will be from 5:30 until 6:30 followed by a short membership meeting and then our featured speaker, Mike Cole, the "bug guy" around 7:00. Mike has attended the Ma/RI Council Indian Hollow gatherings for some years now is one of the most knowledgeable and personable entomologists around. For those who want to stay and eat, dinner will follow Mike's presentation and will be "order off the menu."

This first meeting is our Annual Meeting in accordance with the chapter by-laws. We will elect officers and a board of directors for 2016. If anyone has an interest in joining the board or becoming an officer, please let me know at free2fish2002@gmail.com. We'll be happy to add your name to the list.

The remainder of the year is forming up nicely. Plans include our annual Christmas Party fundraiser - also at the BWG - on Thursday December 10th. This is our most popular event of the year, with the huge bucket raffle, maybe an auction or two, and our own John Burns on the keyboard. We intend to have the same menu as last year and the restaurant is holding its price. Invitations will be sent out beforehand and details will be also be on our chapter website.

Speaking of our chapter website, our chapter now boasts two savvy tech guys to help the work so ably begun by Ron Wojick and his students at Taconic High School. John Burns and Jim Maselli are jointly going to take a look at the site and see how it might be improved. Visit www.taconictroutunlimited.org.

The chapter is going to sponsor another Fly Fishing Film Festival this year, following the great success of last year. The films will be all new and just as spectacular as before. Bill Travis has agreed to pull the event together and details will follow regarding when and where the festival will be held.

Continued on Page 2

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (Con't)

We would also like to hold one or more fly tying nights this coming Winter. The idea came from Henry Sweren and was enthusiastically supported by the board. We are now trying to determine if we want to make this an informal get-together of interested members or whether it might be a way of introducing members to the hobby. Actually, we may be able to do both some cold, Sunday afternoon. It would be fun to do this regularly throughout the year.

There is growing interest on the board to organizing a local Healing Waters, Reel Recovery or similar retreat. One issue is finding a place to accommodate participants and which is hopefully close to a place to fish. Please let me or any board member know if you have any ideas along these lines or would like to help.

That's it for a summary of what's going on. I hope you enjoy this issue. THE BACKCAST will be on vacation this coming Spring and in it's absence the chapter will be sending out email notices of coming events, such as Indian Hollow weekend. Also log onto the chapter website for up-to-date information.

I'll be back in touch next Fall with another newsletter. Until then, be safe and be fishing!

Allen Gray

TU STATE OF THE TROUT REPORT

Included in the wealth of information on TU's great new website is its first assessment of the status of native trout in the U.S.

The report was prepared by a staff of TU scientists and details not just the status of trout in America but also the trends revealed by the study. The results are disturbing. Of the 28 native trout

species known to exist in America, three are now extinct. Of the remaining species, half occupy only a quarter of their original historic range. There are graphs and illustrations detailing trends throughout the U.S.

There is also some good news in the report. Specific stream restoration efforts and the reestablishment of native species in parts of the U.S. are highlighted. An important aspect

of the publication is how anyone interested in helping maintain and restore wild trout can get involved.

TU plans to release future studies dedicated to Alaskan fish, native greyling populations, ocean-going steelhead and salmon.

A PDF copy of the report is available to download on the TU website (TU.org.).

TU COMMENTS TO THE FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION ON THE TENNESSEE GAS PIPELINE

The Taconic Chapter, along with other chapters in areas directly affected by the pipeline, has signed on to a draft of comments prepared by TU's Eastern Water Project Director in response to the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Northeast Energy Direct Project. The FERC Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS asked for comments on environmental issues as well as set the schedule for Public Scoping Meetings.

Before approval, the draft comments were reviewed by the chapter board and by John Burns, the Mass/RI Council Environmental Chair.

Before providing its general comments, TU noted that the Applicant, Tennessee Gas Pipeline, LLC, significantly changed the project and revised its Resource Reports 1-13 which were the subjects of hundreds of earlier comments and 6 of the 13 public scoping meetings. Therefore, TU strongly recommended that the 60-day scoping period be re-started and additional hearings be held for meaningful public participation in the process.

In its general comments, TU identified its mission of conserving, protecting and restoring America's trout and salmon fisheries and, in that regard, raised concerns about the 418 miles of new 12" to 36" diameter pipeline crossing more than 220 streams designated as native or wild trout streams or which have high trout habitat potential. An apparent lack of concern about these streams was reflected in the Applicant's failure to yet identify the water quality designation/fishery classification for 125 of these streams.

Additionally, TU commented that the EIS should evaluate whether two proposed stream crossings on Weston Brook and Wahconah Falls Brook here in Berkshire County could be reduced to one stream crossing by moving the pipeline route less than 0.1 mile.

TU also recommends that the draft EIS explore the use of smaller right-of-ways by applying alternative pipeline construction and placement techniques. Some of the examples provided would permit use of a minimum 50-foot right-of-way requiring less workspace acreage.

Considerable attention is paid to stream crossing methods. The discussion, while technical, comes down to whether the Applicant adequately considered all available stream crossing methods in order to minimize impact. According to TU, the report fails to explain what information was gathered during surveys and related analyses as well as what criteria and type of evaluation process will be used to arrive at the final decision on stream crossing methodology. Such information is considered vital to meaningful public review and recommendations for avoiding impact to native and wild trout.

As part of the evaluation process, TU sees inadequate evaluation in the draft EIS of different opportunities for sediment reduction and erosion control in each phase of construction. Particular attention is paid to locations where the pipeline parallels a stream or travels along headwater systems in steep terrain. Reference is also made to the need for a preliminary storm water pollution prevention plan as an appendix to the draft EIS. The concern here is pollutants and warm water discharge flowing outside the work site due to inadequate site isolation. Much of the region through which the pipeline is set to travel is limestone, with caverns, sinks and underground streams leading to water resources

TENNESSEE GAS PIPELINE (con't)

TU also recommends identification of minimum buffer setbacks for construction activities on slopes or near streams with site-specific determinations near any stream supporting trout or trout reproduction to determine if the buffer distance should be greater.

Additional comments are included on restoration to pre-construction conditions at each stream-crossing location; an impact analysis on aquatic life of hydrostatic testing, especially as it relates to stream temperatures and water levels; establishment of a pre-construction database for post-construction monitoring; and, perhaps most importantly, a detailed cumulative harm analysis so that the effects of the Project over time can be evaluated in addition to the real-time anticipated impacts.

This is especially important in the context of past and anticipated future pipeline construction along the same corridor. Co-location with the already-present Constitution Pipeline may reduce forest fragmentation, but it has a serious cumulative effect in water quality degradation from sedimentation due to multiple stream disturbances.

In summary, TU urges the Commission to prepare an EIS that considers all impacts of the Project on stream health so that progress to conserve, protect and conserve coldwater fish habitat will not be undone.

At the time of this writing, the Trout Unlimited comments on the Project are still marked "DRAFT - NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION." In-pur from all TU chapters along the pipeline route will be considered and a final, coordinated set of comments submitted to the Commission by August 31st.

TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM

Karen Karlberg, a long-time member of our chapter, manages a "Trout in the Classroom" program at the Becket Elementary School. She says that she enjoys doing it and the kids love it.

Every year, brown trout fry are brought into the class room and put into a special tank with a chiller so that they can grow and be watched by the students. When the time is right, they are released into a nearby river where they will hopefully thrive and make it their home. The students take part in the release and it is a special outing.

For many years until his death, another long time

Taconic Chapter member, Dave O'Clair, helped out with the Atlantic Salmon Egg Rearing Program (ASERP) at the Becket School until it was no longer funded by the state. Karen continued with the trout program after the ASERP ended.

Karen recently brought to the attention of the board that the tank used in the program had to be replaced and she suggested that it would be fitting memorial to Dave to have the chapter provide a replacement in his name. At our last board meeting, the money for a replacement tank was authorized.

I think Dave would be pleased.

PAUL, THE TARPON AND THE SHARK by Allen Gray

Paul Knauth and I were out for an evening of Sanibel Island fly fishing for Snook under the dock lights. Our captain, Daniel Andrews, suggested we head into the gulf and spin cast for some big Tarpon while we waited for darkness.

The April water temperature was far warmer than usual and Tarpon were moving North in good numbers. Unfortunately, there were unusually large numbers of sharks around as well. Daniel commented as we motored out from the marina that he and his clients had been having serious trouble with sharks over the past few days.

We settled in about a half mile off the beach, baited up and put one rod in the holder and hand-held the second. Daniel's sonar was showing only modest activity when the reel on the holder rod started to sing. I was holding the hand rod, so Paul grabbed the static rod and held on for dear life. The fish jumped. It was a large Tarpon - a very large Tarpon - and Paul's first. He bowed like he should as the fish surfaced and Daniel and I scrambled to get our cameras.

Just to make things interesting, Paul's shoulder had been giving him trouble lately. He was in a lot of pain; perhaps not enough to keep him from fly-flinging for

Snook, but certainly not good for fighting a 130+ pound Tarpon. Just to make things worse, Daniel told him that he needed to get this fish to the boat within 10 to 12 minutes or the sharks would find us.

Too late. As Paul was fighting the Tarpon to the boat, the sonar showed sharks starting to circle below. It was easy to see on Paul's face that he was in considerable discomfort, but he got the Tarpon right next to the boat in good time. Just then, there was a loud "thump" under the boat as an 8 foot Bull Shark lunged at the free dinner. Paul opened the bail on the rod to let the Tarpon run. Daniel started the boat, revved the engine and took off after the shark. By circling the boat, we managed to scare the shark away and bring in the fish a second time.

By now, the sonar was showing large numbers of shark under the boat, so Daniel cut the fish loose without waiting for pictures. Paul was able to "touch the leader," confirming a caught and boated Tarpon before the fish took off.

Unfortunately, the story doesn't end there. As we were congratulating Paul on his

first Tarpon, the water erupted about 10 yards away. The huge shark, that was earlier waiting under the boat, had returned. In two massive bites, the now tired-out Tarpon was gone. All that remained were floating silver dollar-sized scales and bits of flesh. Daniel advised against grabbing a souvenir scale off the water surface.

We switched back to fly rods and headed back to the "inside" after Snook. I got even in my own way, since Paul was in serious pain by this time and the Snook were pretty much all mine for the catching.

Fortunately, they were big and plentiful and SO much fun to catch on a fly rod. The fly of choice was, naturally, the white Schminnow pattern detailed in the last issue of The Backcast.

It was a great evening of exciting fishing and the photos and videos are there for the memories.



HOUSATONIC RIVER CLEANUP

Thanks to the joint efforts of Alison Dixon with the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) and Jane Winn of Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT), the Housatonic River clean-up on Saturday, August 8th was a tremendous success.

TU Taconic Chapter members Mike Zanolli, Bill Travis, Ben Wood and I joined a large group of over 25 folks to scour the riverbanks above and below Fred Gardner Park for trash and non-organic debris. We were in kayaks and canoes this time rather than the usual walking method and hauled out everything from bicycles, shopping carts and tires to the usual smaller junk like

bottles and cans. Mike Zanolli brought his own kayak, as did others, and the Berkshire Natural Resources Council loaned us canoes and trucks to trailer the canoes to and from the river.

Community support for these clean-ups is especially noteworthy. Panera Bread provided decadent pastries in the morning and Blue Q bought all of us a wonderful delivered lunch of Baba Louie's pizza and drinks. Blue Q also came through with a really interesting array of gifts for participants. Great SWAG, and "interesting" as only Blue Q can create! Big Y and the Home Depot came through with gloves, bags

and a donated gift certificate. We really need to patronize businesses that provide such great support.

These clean-ups provide good work and are a lot of fun. I overheard two young ladies from PHS commenting on what a cool outing it was and how they wanted to sign up again next time. Nice to hear.

I'll continue to announce these ventures as HVA and BEAT set them up and I hope the chapter can continue to give all the support it can provide.



FLY TYING CORNER - The Extended Body Midge

The extended body midge is a simple and useful fly that is easier to see on the water than many of the Fall midge and trico patterns.

Ingredients:

#16 -18 short shank dry fly hook (smaller if you can)

Black Thread

Black "big fly" thread for tail

White CDC puff wing

Black sparkle yarn or z-lon legs

Black Peacock Ice dubbing for body and thorax

Recipe:

Tie in a few inches of "Big Fly" black thread extended out the rear of the fly approximately twice the length of the hook shank. Double back the thread and twist the tail until it forms a narrow rope. Tie down on the shank body and coat the tail with head cement if desired to hold the twist. The cement may not be necessary, depending on the material.

Add a small white CDC puff as a wing behind the head extending back to the rear of the hook bend.

Tie in a few crinkly bits of black sparkle yarn or Z-lon on either side of the fly for legs and sparsely dub the body. Tie off.

That's it. Remember that the materials listed are not sacrosanct. The tail and leg materials can be improvised with whatever you have available that gives a similar look. The black peacock ice dubbing does seem to be important to the overall look of the fly.



