



Merrimack River Valley Chapter Trout Unlimited

September 2010
Volume vix Issue I

President's Message

We'd like to take the opportunity to welcome everyone back as we resume our meetings and work for the upcoming year. Our last official gathering was the Cookout at the Chapter Trip in June, and I'd like to thank everyone who coordinated the gathering, help set up, cooked, and cleaned up as this was another successful event enjoyed by the members and guests that attended.

The board has been busy during the summer moving forward on the Milford Dam project, the Piscataquog project, and working with the state TU Council to arrange for our display booth and fund raising project at the National TU Meeting which is being held at Waterville Valley this year. An announcement has been sent out to the general membership via e-mail with details for registering and attending the event. I know the cost is hard to swallow for many people in this tough economic climate, but if you have an interest and can afford to go, try to participate as we may never have another meeting in our backyard again for awhile.

Dick Peterson has lined up a number of interesting presentations and events for the meetings; I would hope that we can generate better participation at our meetings, so mark the dates on your calendar and bring a couple of friends. We've taken note of some of your suggestions and have tried to keep the topics geared to the general interest of the attendees.

With the projects we have undertaken and the work we have ahead of us it is important that we get the TU message in front of our audience; we will again be working at our usual shows, events, and meetings and will be working to raise and maintain funds during the year.

The last update I have is with regards to the newsletter and general membership communication this year. We have decided to have four newsletters this year of which two will be electronic and two will be mailed. In addition to the four newsletters there will be communications sent out via e-mail for meeting announcements, special events, and any other necessary announcements. If you want to receive these updates it is important that your contact information is current and up to date at the TU National registry, so please make an effort to keep your information up to date and current. We are looking to lower our mailing costs by doing this and feel that e-mail communication is a more efficient and effective way to keep the general membership informed.

I hope by the time you read this that water and air temps return to normal-- it's been a long, hot summer.

Thanks for your continued support and we're looking forward to seeing you on September 14th.

Ron Hamel

***Meetings/Speakers 2nd
Tuesday of the Month
September—May
Doors Open at 6:30pm
Meeting Starts at 7:30***

**September 14, 2010 ~
Montana Trout Odyssey
2010: A two-week adventure
to western Montana in pur-
suit of trout on 7 rivers—
plus a visit to Glacier
National Park**

**October 12, 2010 ~
Alaska By Motor Home—
Peggy Brenner**

**November 9, 2010 ~
Wyoming Fishing
Dennis Guilbeault**

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Embrace-A-Stream (EAS) Project Update- Milford, NH dams removal on the Souhegan River (TU National Grant and MRV-TU contributions). Jeff Lindberg

Enthusiasm is running high for studying benefits and cost effectiveness of removing the McLane and Goldman Dams near downtown Milford. TU's view: Take out the dams and open up another 6 miles of the Souhegan to fish movement (on top of the 14 miles of river opened by removing the Merrimack Village dam). Also, the impounded reaches associated with both dams contribute significantly to warming of the river and oxygen depletion- not good things for cold water fish.

Progress has been made regarding getting the feasibility study up and running. The town of Milford has secured adequate grants to give them the green light to go forward. Milford recently awarded a contract to Gomez and Sullivan Engineers, P.C. to perform the tasks required for the feasibility study. This consulting company was also prime contractor for the Merrimack Village Dam removal (in fact, project manager for G&S is once again Mark Wamser, who brings good experience to the effort). Ron Hamel and I attended the initial public hearing at Milford town building (chaired by Mark)- mood was generally upbeat.

Estimated cost to complete this study is about \$135,000 cash and \$36,000 of "in-kind" contributions. TU National awarded an EAS grant in the amount of \$7,000 for this project. MRV committed \$1,500 cash and 160 hours (\$3,240 in-kind).

It was my pleasure to hand deliver two checks (\$7,000 and \$1,500) to Guy Scaife, Milford Town Administrator and Dawn Griska, Milford Town Assistant. There is a good group of or-



ganizations interested in the success of this project, including NH Fish and Game, USF&W, Souhegan Watershed Association and several other notables. Just to mention two others by name who are both seasoned and experienced professionals in the dam removals game— Deb Loiselle, NH Department of Environmental Services, and Eric Hutchins, NOAA. They will be speaking on dam removal status in NH at our January, 2011 chapter meeting.

The focus of MRV efforts during the feasibility study will be public education and outreach. We are putting together a game plan to effectively beat the TU drum and promote awareness of TU objectives. Fabricating a display explaining benefits of dam removals to cold water fish, and getting it in front of civil/school/public groups is one of the tasks we are discussing. Supporting future public hearings is also on the list. Anyone who wants to get involved is more than welcome.

Textbook Stipend Awarded to Manchester West Senior

A Five hundred dollar textbook stipend has been awarded to Claire Penney, of Manchester West High School's class of 2010. Her essay demonstrated a clear understanding of the TU Mission and the connection between a love of fly-fishing and protection of river ecosystems.

This award, granted to a high school senior who plans to pursue environmental studies in college, helps offset the high cost of textbooks. It is one way the chapter reaches out to the next generation in support of continued efforts to protect, reconnect, restore and sustain our cold water fishery resources in New Hampshire's Merrimack Valley.

Congratulations to Claire Abigail Penney of Hooksett, New Hampshire!

My First Fly Rod ~ Jerry Bernier

One of my school chums had been extolling the virtues of fly fishing and even had a fly rod. Although as a child fly fishing seemed way out of my reach, a next door neighbor had seen a telescoping rod in a sporting goods shop window (we did a lot of sporting goods shop window shopping in those days; we could afford that), and we decided to take a look. At \$4.95, we could almost swing that. But then there was the reel and the line; it looked out of reach again. That school chum said he had an old line that he would give me, and I did some more window shopping till I found a reel for \$1.50. I dug deep, tapped my folks for a small loan and I was in business. I used some of my spinning line for a leader and went off to a trout brook about four miles from my house.



I forgot to mention that an old friend of my dad's had seen me toiling at building a model boat and mumbled something about "having just the thing for me". It turns out that he was having increasing vision problems and decided to give up fly tying. That day he saw me model making, he returned with all his fly tying stuff, including instructional books and everything, and gave them to me. I read it all and tied up a few flies, and went up to that brook I mentioned earlier. The Brookies didn't seem to care that my flies all had enormous heads (getting the proportions right was a big problem).

I remember catching that first one, a beautifully marked fish, 8 ½" long. I didn't own a creel so I had brought a plastic bag with me and gently put it inside. Things slowed down a bit, and I decided to sit on a log and rest up. I just loved to look at that beautiful brookie, and during several lulls in the action, took the bag out of my pocket and just gazed in awe at that work of art. This time on the log, I picked the bag up by the bottom and the trout fell out into the brook. I valiantly chased it downstream, got quite wet in the process, but never saw the fish again.

That was not the only product of that first day on the water. This telescoping rod was made of steel and proved rather a heavy tool for a long day's fishing. My hand had a red chafing mark the size of a half dollar, and my wrist was sore as all get out. What's more, the copper plating that coated the sections for corrosion resistance (this was before the days of stainless steel) started to wear off after a while, and one day late in the season, the rod seized up altogether and that was the end of it.

But I was hooked, on fly fishing, and on fly tying, and that was 65 years ago. I remember going to the library and looking into trout fishing. There were five books all told and I eagerly hand-copied fly patterns (no copiers either). On the other hand, there were materials required that I couldn't find or had the least idea as to what might be a substitute. But that was a start on what has proved to be a wonderful adventure.

Fishing Tip—Bob Morrison



There is a gadget for fly fishing called a Ty-Rite that looks like a short mechanical pen or pencil; it has a small wire hook at its distal end instead of a pen nib. The Ty-Rite can be used to pick flies out of a fly box, but is principally used to hold a fly by its hook bend while tying a leader tippet to the hook eye. Ty-Rites come in two required sizes, and cost about \$10.00 each at the fly shops.

As a less expensive alternative, try using a Test Clip Adapter, also known as a Mini-Clip available at Radio Shack for about \$3.50 per pair, to do these same jobs. One clip will accommodate almost any size trout fly, while you need both a large and a small Ty-Rite to handle the fly sizes that we normally use, say from number 4 to 24. I have been using these clips for about eight seasons. They are especially useful in tying the modified clinch knot, and you can't beat the price.

Piscataquog Watershed Eastern Brook Trout Coalition ~Gerry Crow

Our chapter has joined in a partnership with NH Fish & Game, New Boston Conservation Commission, Saint Anselm College Biology Department, Southern New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, and the Russell Piscataquog River Watershed Foundation. This Coalition is dedicated to protecting, restoring, and securing the habitat of the native Eastern Brook Trout in the Piscataquog Watershed.

Brook Trout are a key indicator of the ecological health of the watershed, and to the extent that they remain there today, they demonstrate that much of the watershed remains in good condition. There are opportunities to restore and enhance the integrity of the habitat, and these can be critical efforts if Eastern Brook Trout are to thrive in the face of climate change and development pressures. This collaboration intends to use solid science, careful planning, community engagement, and landowner outreach to work within the watershed to ensure Brook Trout and all its associated species have a bright future in the area.

This summer the coalition hired an intern to assist Prof. Barry Wicklow of St Anselm College to collect data in the headwaters of the South Branch of the Piscataquog River. Data encompassing such factors as water temperature and quality, macro invertebrates, and a survey of wild brook trout was gathered. Samples have been sent to a DNA testing lab to evaluate brook trout stocks to determine whether they are pure native strains.

A class on culvert assessment protocols was conducted and a number of chapter members were trained and subsequently surveyed some culverts in the watershed. Other activities under way include GIS mapping of critical habitat to include culverts, land owners abutting critical habitat and evaluation of potential for riparian cover plantings along Route 13 in New Boston.

In addition, the chapter will be training volunteers to conduct water quality testing on the Piscataquog River. Any members interested in being trained and conducting periodic testing should contact Gerry Crow gerry@flyfishnewengland.com or Joel Kasper joelkasper@aquagenicsinc.com.

END OF A LONG JOURNEY FOR SALMON UP THE CONNECTICUT ~ Mike Croteau

The Connecticut River once boasted the longest and most abundant Atlantic salmon runs in American History. It has been estimated that these migrating fish traveled as far as Colebrook, New Hampshire, and perhaps into the headwaters of Indian Stream in Pittsburg, New Hampshire. Passage from the Connecticut watershed into tributary waters such as the Ammonoosuc River, for example, also provided unique travel access for Atlantic salmon runs which made their trek well up to the waters near Crawford Notch and back again. It was reported ten pound salmon had been taken there fifty years before the construction of the dam at South Hadley, Massachusetts which was the inevitable cause of their total extirpation.

Before 1800, Atlantic Salmon of the Connecticut were considered plentiful as a natural resource. For those writing a century later, however, that resource was a distant memory that could only be recaptured through hearsay accounts that survived in perpetuity long after the salmon were gone. Douglas Moss's unpublished 1946 work *The History of the Connecticut River and Its Fisheries* was probably the first serious attempt made in the twentieth century to provide a complete historical picture of the Connecticut River and its Fisheries. Moss's original intent as a fisheries biologist was to review the life history and biology of the River from a scientific rather than historical perspective. The end result: A lifelong infatuation in recapturing the River's historical fishery. Moss's sources were really secondhand accounts of those who heard old tales of the Connecticut a century earlier.

The exact amount of salmon taken in the 1700s in the Connecticut River is not available because fishery science and accurate record keeping of fish migrating up River did not exist. All that existed were old tales of past generation explorers and settlers to the Region which handed down their shared or published accounts long after all the fish had been caught. The archeological evidence also appears absent because Atlantic salmon bones at certain sites are, today, practically nonexistent. There are some historians who have argued that colonists exaggerated the amount of salmon caught or the salmon, as a fish, was the victim of pure misidentification. Shad, for example, may have been mistaken for the salmon, according to early accounts. Unfortunately the categorizing and systematic study of natural history of fishes of North America took place a century after the salmon's extinction from most of New England and the Connecticut River in particular.

The most intriguing aspect from Moss's *History of the Fish of the Connecticut River* is that *no brook trout are mentioned* in the historical record. It is plausible, even conceivable, perhaps, in hindsight that brook trout, themselves, may have been mistaken for salmon, or, that their presence was overshadowed by the abundance of other fish. This is merely an assumption on my part, and, unfortunately, I was unable to find any explanation to the contrary. I, myself, would welcome such an explanation.

Making a valid case for the Great Atlantic Salmon runs which once traveled up the Connecticut River and its tributaries, for the most part, rests more plausibly with the work of legislative bodies. A petition to the New Hampshire General Court on May 17, 1788, from a gentlemen in Lancaster reported abuses of taking salmon on the Connecticut, in particular the net barring of the river with seines and weirs. According to Jack Noon's excerpt *History of a Fishery*, the complaint alleged abuses in fishing for the salmon. A dam across the Ashuelot River, says Noon, drew criticism from some NH Legislators in 1798 because it had blocked passage of "salmon, trout and other fish to the extent that the said Fish are entirely hindered in their course up the River Ashuelet." This passage from Noon's book is of interest because it is here that legislators refer to trout and salmon as separate species of fish. The laws prohibiting obstruction of fish passage stressed the equal importance of both species of salmonids which provided benefits to the river towns of Hinsdale, Winchester, Swanzey and Keene, New Hampshire.

It has also been theorized, that Atlantic salmon were as numerous as Pacific salmon and yet they received minor recognition in terms of their significant contribution as a natural resource. Some hypothesize the absence of fish bones at designated archeological sites is due to climactic cooling known as the Little Ice Age; salmon did not appear in New England waters until around 1550-1800 A.D. Europeans who first arrived in Northeastern America were more likely than not to find Atlantic salmon in every river from Labrador to the Hudson River.

The end of the great salmon runs of the Connecticut River was caused by a period in American history that came to be known as the Industrial Revolution. The transformation from agrarian to mercantile economy in New England which contributed to pollution, exploitation of timber, and construction of mill factories and dams sealed the fate of Atlantic salmon fishing. The Connecticut River salmon fisheries once considered a source of great abundance could probably never be duplicated in today's modern world nor reach the infinite proportions of a fishery on such a grand scale as was once proclaimed by old timers.

The New Hampshire General Court's efforts in 1786 and 1798 to regulate populations of salmon in the Upper Connecticut was, in reality, a futile effort because the construction of dams across the Connecticut in Massachusetts at South Hadley and Turner Falls in 1794 and 1798 prevented salmon from ever reaching their final destination northward. According to Noon and other writers, accounts as late as 1808 spoke of salmon still lingering in the Upper Connecticut region. But the Atlantic salmon which had journeyed close to 400 miles North a century earlier had become a mere fish tale. Hence, the end of the salmon's abundance in the Connecticut marked the beginning of a new chapter in what was to eventually become the movement toward fisheries restoration, conservation, and management.

2010 NH Kids Trout Camp July 14th – 18th ~ Burr Tupper

This year the Kids Trout Camp was held at Mettack Lodge on the shores of First Connecticut Lake. It proved to be an outstanding location with easy access to the trophy sections of the Connecticut River and with plenty of room for casting demonstrations, lectures and lots of space inside for dining and fly tying activities. This year was the first year that the NH TU Council was responsible for the camp and the council received great support from the chapters in the form of funding and personnel. Burr Tupper and Mary Weiss were councilors from MRVTU. The five day camp teaches appreciation and stewardship of cold water fisheries through the art and science of fly fishing.

The camp consisted of basic instruction and on the water experience. All the campers caught fish and thoroughly enjoyed their experience. We were able to help Joe Norton of TU by planting 125 trees at the confluence of Indian Stream and the Connecticut River. Diane Timmins spent time with the campers on a fun filled fishing shocking morning and CO Chris Evans spoke to the kids on safety and rules and regs.



Campers and Councilors



Camper with very large Brookie



MEETINGS ARE HELD THE SECOND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH (SEPT-MAY) AT THE SWEENEY AMERICAN LEGION POST, 251 MAPLE STREET MANCHESTER NH. DIRECTIONS: ELM STREET TO VALLEY STREET TO MAPLE STREET (1ST LEFT AFTER STADIUM)



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