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President's Message & Upcoming Chapter Events

Dear fellow LWTU members,

This past month, Lee Wulff Chapter lost a couple of legends. Curtis Watts, past chapter president, and Bob Olach, preeminent fly tier, bamboo rod builder, and angler, both passed away after lengthy illnesses. They were both outstanding human beings and made great contributions to the chapter. We are all better for knowing Curtis and Bob and they will be sorely missed.

April is finally here!! The days are getting longer and we've had a few teases of spring weather. Fear not, reliable trout fishing weather will soon be here.

Please join us for our **April Monthly Meetup** that will take place at [Village Pizza & Pub \(145 N John F. Kennedy Dr, Carpentersville, IL 60110\)](#) on Thursday, April 16, 2026 with

social hour starting at 6:00 PM. Consider joining us even if you live further out, tollway access is convenient.

Our **April Monthly Meetup** will serve as a warmup for our Early Spring Outing. Join us for a **Skills Fair** where we'll be tying and sharing flies that fish well in late April Driftless conditions. We will also demonstrate knot tying, and discuss reading water and finding good fishing near our outing headquarters in Westby Wisconsin. A few fish stories may be told as well.

The **Early Spring Outing** will once again be based out of Westby WI and run from April 23 through April 26. Logan Mill Lodge is fully subscribed and we may be looking for volunteers to share the rooms that have multiple beds. If you still want to attend, you can also make other local lodging arrangements or camp. All are welcome to join the stream buddy system and communal dinners. Details will be published closer to the date.

The **Late Spring Outing** will be based out of Fennimore and run from May 14 through May 17. Lodging and dining will be on your own, but there are plenty of good options in the area.

To express interest or ask questions regarding the outings, please contact Ralph Lessor at outings@leewulfftu.org.

We are seeking a few folks to **step up and help out** with the chapter. The most immediate need is the Holiday Banquet. This will be Scott Lammers final year coordinating the Holiday Banquet. We're looking for someone to shadow Scott this year and run with it for the next few iterations. Looking ahead, we will need to fill several officer positions in Spring 2027.

I can honestly say that I have found taking an officer role to be very rewarding. Please take a moment to consider what you've gained from this group of fine folks. I urge you to consider giving back and paying it forward. Please contact me prez@leewulfftu.org if you have questions about what this may entail.

Our **book exchange** program will once again be available at in-person chapter meetups. Purchase books for as little as \$5, and then optionally return them after reading for a \$3 exchange credit. There will also be prize-drawings! Tickets will be available to purchase at \$5 each.

Our **March meetup** featured **Dan Makauskas**, from Illinois DNR. Dan is the Project Manager of the Lake Michigan project and his presentation highlighted Salmonids in the Great Lakes.



Scenes from the March Meetup with Dan Makauskas

Here's a wonderful example of **Lee Wulff Chapter friendship and camaraderie**. As a token of appreciation for stepping up and helping out when he had to be away from the chapter, Jerry Ward presented Barb Solomon with a complete fly fishing outfit (rod, reel, line, and hand-tied flies) at one of our weekly fly tying meetups. More than the fishing and conservation, it's the people that make this group such an honor to be a part of.



Jerry presents Barb with a St Croix Rod and Reel Combo

Don't let the cooler temperatures keep you from getting out to fish. [Wisconsin Early Catch and Release Season](#) will close on Friday, April 3. The [Wisconsin harvest season regulations](#) have changed this year and will open the first Saturday of April (4/4) rather than in May. Remember that [Iowa trout season](#) **is open year round**, so head on over there if you need to scratch an itch.

Once some warmer temperatures arrive, it will be time to think about **Lake Michigan tributary fishing** for big chinook, coho, steelhead, and brown trout. Rain drives fish into the tributaries, but be mindful of [water flows](#) and do not wade if levels are unsafe. If you need a few pointers, feel free to ask fellow chapter members for tips at our monthly meetups.

Our **Trout in the Classroom** program is up and running. This year we are working with rainbow trout instead of brook trout as in the past. The fish are in the tanks and release the fish sometime in the spring. Please email me at prez@leewulfft.org for further information.

Please track your **volunteer hours** and [report volunteer hours](#) to the chapter treasurer by 4/10/2026. [Click here](#) for our new online portal which makes the reporting process a breeze.

Upcoming Chapter Events

- April Skills Fair & Chapter Meetup - Thursday, April 16 - Village Pizza
- Early Spring Driftless Outing - April 23 through April 26 - Westby WI
- Duker School Event - Monday, May 11 - McHenry IL (volunteers needed, [click here](#) to RSVP via email or for more information about this event)
- Spring Driftless Outing - May 14 through May 17 - Fennimore WI
- Chapter Picnic - date and location TBD

Do you have an idea for a **future speaker** or program? Please email speakers@leewulfft.org.

Finally, we are always seeking **volunteers** to help out the chapter. Please email me at prez@leewulfft.org for further information. Here's an easy one - could someone take

the initiative to **snap some photos at the monthly meetups**? We need to save some memories for posterity and obtain new content for our banquet slideshow.

Watch your email for **Evite** invitations to upcoming events. I hope to see all of you very soon.

Tight Lines!!

Jonathan Culli



When moving between bodies of water while fishing please be extra diligent in cleaning and drying your gear. Read [this recent press release about *Previously Undetected Parasite Discovered In Wild Wisconsin Trout*](#) to learn more about why this is so important.



Grumpy's Page by Kurt Haberl

It's interesting what happens to people over a lifetime of fly fishing for trout, especially if one belongs to an organization like Trout Unlimited, which is dedicated to conservation, education, and passing along some rather generous values to emerging generations. It's not the same as the well-known process of first hoping to catch a trout, then hoping to catch a lot of trout, then hoping to catch a big trout, and near the end, hoping to catch a single trout one has targeted with a fly one has tied. Some people are affected by being a naive newbie first, then an obnoxious braggart, then a secret guardian of honey holes, and finally a mere curmudgeon who denigrates the foibles, success, strategies, and experiences of anyone who wanders within earshot.

Then there is a guy like Curtis Watts, a former president of the Lee Wulff chapter, who was always careful to include others whether it was at a meeting, choosing fishing partners for the day, or telling stories about it around a campfire at night. Why? Because in his boyhood he was an orphan. The best among us give to others what they never got when they were young.

For most of his time with us, he answered to the nickname of Wet Curtis. Was it because he loved to fish wet flies or bead head nymphs? No. Was he a careless wader who fell in the stream. Maybe, but I doubt he slipped on slimy rocks or mud banks any more than the rest of us. He became Wet Curtis because on a trip downriver in an Au Sable river boat with Bob Carrescia, a rather unforgiving vessel on any water with a current, he stepped onboard before launching, and flipped the boat over. A lesser man would have sworn his partners to secrecy, but Curtis took on the nickname because he told everyone about it back at the cabins. Not only did he tell the rest of us, he wore his monicker like a badge, always accompanied by a grin. Only big men can chuckle at themselves.

Through the years, he trained his ever-present companion, a black Lab named Kaptin, and was trained by his four-legged partner in return. Kaptin was an infallible spotter, whether he actually saw fish in a run, smelled them, or intuitively knew they were there. Curtis probably hooked more fish than the rest of us because of Kaptin, but Kaptin seemed to think that any fish that was hooked was rightfully *his*, and so he would go after fish as soon as they were brought to the shallows. Curtis probably landed far fewer fish than most of us, but had more fun doing it.

Kaptin hated tents, so he made Curtis buy an R-Pod camper, a nice one with a bed that slept two, although somehow the Black Lab came to own two-thirds of the bed. We wouldn't have known, except that Curtis reported it with a grin.

In time, the camper became more than a comfort to Kaptin. With Kaptin's permission, Curtis took in a boarder on most campouts. In his later years, Bob Olach continued to serve as camp cook because his years in Viet Nam made his stomach as sensitive as a babe's. If he cooked, he knew he could eat well without getting sick, but that mastery of

the cast iron pan benefitted all of us, including Kaptin. When Bob could still pitch his Kelty tent with help, but couldn't sleep on the ground anymore without suffering the pain of stiff joints, aching muscles, and a "crick" in his neck, Curtis took him in, not to wage a losing territorial battle with Kaptin, but to sleep snug in his own bunk at the other end of the camper. Over the next few years, when Curtis added a spring-loaded awning to his camper, Bob voiced great appreciation, and then added that it might be nice to have a screened porch below the awning. That screen appeared on the next campout, along with tarp side that blocked chill wind. In the following campouts, a heater appeared, then a floor mat under the entire awning, next came two lounge chairs and a thick fleece doggy bed, eventually a side table for drinks, then warm lanterns, and finally a line for drying waders under the awning.

You get the picture. Fly fishing seems to make each of us more of what we were when we were young. For Curtis, that became more kindness, more inclusion, more consideration, more of the sheepish grin, and more of the gentleman simply enjoying himself and making sure those with him were the same.

I don't know where Curtis and Bob are right now, but I wouldn't be surprised if other dimensions and worlds of light have the equivalent of a camper, awning, wind screen, floor mat, lounge chairs and a side table for drinks. When they need the doggy bed, it will be ready, probably soon. Cheers, guys.



Tell Congress: Protect Roadless Areas

The [U.S. Forest Service recently announced](#) its intent to rescind the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This action would remove protections for 58.5 million acres of national forest land across 39 states that are home to irreplaceable fish and wildlife habitat.

Roadless areas provide some of the most important habitat for trout and salmon in the United States. They are destination locations for hunters and anglers. Roadless areas provide the spawning and rearing grounds for some of Alaska's most robust salmon and steelhead runs and serve as the headwaters for the majority of Blue Ribbon trout streams in the West. In the Midwest and East, roadless areas also conserve important trout fisheries. For example, 64 percent of roadless areas in Michigan and 90 percent of roadless areas in New Hampshire provide habitat for native trout.

This issue affects trout and salmon fisheries across the country and anglers need to speak up for these important public lands. Right now, your members of Congress need to hear from their constituents how important these public lands are for our outdoor traditions. Later this summer, the U.S. Forest Service will begin the process of repealing the Roadless Rule – at that time sending messages to the agency will be crucial.

[Please take a moment today to urge your members of Congress to support strong protections for Roadless Areas and to ensure that the Forest Service provides robust opportunities for the public to make their voices heard.](#)

Trout Unlimited's latest report, [Roadless: America's Sporting Lands](#), illustrates how our outdoor traditions depend on maintaining strong safeguards for roadless areas.

Protect Public Lands

Efforts to sell, dispose, or divest public lands undermine our outdoor traditions and threaten rural economies. These lands belong to all Americans and provide vital access for hunters and anglers. [Click here](#) to take action.

Protect the Boundary Waters

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is under threat from unprecedented congressional action. On Jan 21st, the House of Representatives narrowly passed a resolution that would permanently overturn a [20-year mineral withdrawal issued by the U.S. Forest Service in 2023](#). Join Trout Unlimited in urging the Senate not to pass this resolution.

At nearly 1.1 million acres, the Boundary Waters spreads across the northeastern tip of Minnesota, containing over 1,100 lakes, 2,000 designated campsites, hundreds of miles of rivers and streams, and the largest contiguous areas of uncut forest remaining in the eastern United States. The three-million-acre Superior National Forest, which includes the Boundary Waters, contains 20 percent of all the fresh water in the entire National Forest System.

The Boundary Waters offers unparalleled opportunities for fishing, hunting, camping, and paddling. It's a haven for hunters and anglers who come to the region to pursue walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike, whitetail deer, grouse, black bear, and one of the largest self-sustaining populations of native lake trout in America. The potential loss of these unique recreational opportunities is a stark reminder of the stakes involved in protecting this irreplaceable natural resource. [Click here to take action](#).

Tell your Members of Congress to Pass Comprehensive Mining Reform

Congress is considering a number of policy options to streamline the permitting process for mining on public lands and provide greater certainty for the mining industry. As Congress weighs these policy options, it is imperative that legislation also includes updates to the outdated 1872 Mining Law. Currently, there are no royalties paid on hardrock minerals extracted from public lands and public land managers lack the authority to say “no” to the wrong mine in the wrong place.

A responsible path forward for domestic mining should include dedicating revenue from public lands mining to abandoned mine cleanups, as well as discretion by local public land management professionals to determine – upfront – public lands that are incompatible with mining, such as sensitive fish and wildlife habitats, community

drinking water supplies, or sacred sites, for example. Comprehensive mining reform should address these issues alongside policy options for permitting new mines. [Read more about balancing responsible mining and conservation.](#) [Click here](#) to take action.

Keeping Asian Carp out of the Great Lakes

The state of Illinois has pressed pause on a barrier designed to keep invasive carp from entering the Great Lakes, saying it can no longer count on the federal government to honor its funding obligation to the \$1.15 billion project. [Read more](#) and stay tuned to this important topic.

Soil and Water Conservation District Funding Slashed

The 103rd General Assembly of Illinois has finalized the FY25 budget. Sadly, this budget was signed into law with a roughly 48% decrease in Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) operational funding. Illinois' 97 SWCDs experienced a substantial funding shortfall in the FY 2025 state budget. SWCD operations funding was reduced by \$4 million from \$8.5 million in FY 24 to \$4.5 million in FY 25. The shortfall will lead to the loss of trained and qualified Soil and Water Conservation District employees which will take years of training to replace. Without sufficient funding, employees, much like unprotected soil, will erode away. Help petition to restore state funding [here](#).

Illinois House Bill 1873 Water Recreation Rights

As an angler, you know that the many beautiful streams in Illinois could be much greater recreational assets than they now are. Those streams could provide some of those same memorable, on the water experiences that are available to our neighbors in Wisconsin and Michigan just outside their back-doors. An Illinois Supreme Court decision recently called on the state legislature to reassert the public right to use state waters. The idea is to pass a new law clarifying and modernizing existing rights for river access. [HB1873](#) (104th G.A.) is the legislation that can get this done. Your help is needed to tell your legislators to support this much needed legislation. Please do it now. [Click here to easily take action in under a minute of your time.](#)

Save the Kish

Despite much opposition, the Woodstock City Council recently approved all of the preliminary measures that will allow the Lennar Riverwoods proposed high-density development along the banks of the Kishwaukee River in Woodstock to go forward. Follow this situation [here](#). But it's not over until it's over. Voice any opposition you may have by emailing the Woodstock City Council at citycouncil@woodstockil.gov and [signing this petition](#).

Wisconsin Residents: Save Wisconsin's Essential Stewardship Program

Without legislative action, Wisconsin's iconic 30+ year old public lands initiative will expire in the summer of 2026. Bills have been introduced by both Republicans and Democrats to save this flagship Stewardship program, but little action has taken place since. [Click here](#) to ask your legislators to come together to find a compromise that works for all of Wisconsin and reauthorizes the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Learn more and explore Stewardship-funded projects here: <https://knowlesnelson.org/>

Additional Action Links

Trout Unlimited is not just about trout angling. [The national founders committed to conservation and preservation when they incorporated in 1959](#). In this spirit, please consider taking a few minutes to explore additional ways to take action:

<https://standup.tu.org/> & <https://www.tu.org/conservation/action-center/>

Upcoming Non-Chapter Events

- SWTU Spring 2026 Workdays - Saturdays starting March 28, 2026 ([click here for details](#))
- [IF4](#) screenings in the region:
 - Decorah, IA @ Hotel Winneshiek - April 25, 2026
 - [Richland Center, WI @ Starlite 14 Drive In - June 5, 2026](#)
- [Fly Fishing Film Tour](#) (F3T) screenings in the region:
 - Menomonie, WI @ The Mabel Tainter Theater - April 3, 2026
 - Lake Forest, IL @ Gorton Center - April 12, 2026
 - Holland, MI @ Knickerbocker Theatre - April 15, 2026
 - Glendale, WI @ The Bavarian Bierhaus - September 17, 2026
- [TU 2026 Midwest Regional Rendezvous - Roscommon, MI](#) - May 1-3, 2026
- [TU CX3 Event](#) - St. Paul, MN - September 23 - 27, 2026
- *Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing* (PHWFF) - Ongoing (click [here](#) to get involved)

Chapter Officers

President: Jonathan Culli
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Vice-President: Ken Bruckner
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Secretary: Scott Lammers
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Treasurer: Marty Jandura
treasurer@leewulfftu.org

Join Trout Unlimited



When joining Trout Unlimited (TU) at the national level, TU automatically assigns you to a local chapter based on your Zip Code and [this chapter boundaries map](#).

If not already a TU member, [click here to join TU for as little as \\$17.50 for your first year](#).

Already a TU member but not assigned to the Lee Wulff chapter? Call TU customer service at 1-800-834-2419 and make the switch to the Lee Wulff chapter (#448) today!