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President's Message & Upcoming Chapter Events

Greetings fellow LWTU members,

I hope you have been able to stay safe and warm through this past chilly January. It's been a cold winter but better temperatures and hopefully some good fishing are just around the corner.

Please join us for our **February Monthly Meetup** that will take place at [Village Pizza & Pub \(145 N John F. Kennedy Dr, Carpentersville, IL 60110\)](#) on Thursday, February 19, 2026 with social hour starting at 6:00 PM. Consider joining us even if you live further out, tollway access is convenient.

Our program will feature **Kyle Richards, Don Pluemer, and Ted Swenson**, from Nohr Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Kyle, Don, and Ted will discuss Nohr's extensive conservation projects in the Blue River watershed in Grant and Iowa Counties. Do not miss this presentation. You'll learn about the true mission of Trout Unlimited and likely learn a new spot or two to wet a line.

Our **book exchange** program will once again be available at in-person chapter meetings. 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 January meetup featured Caleb Schnitzler from the Iowa DNR based out of the Decorah Fish Hatchery. We truly enjoyed his presentation on conservation practices, the state of native brook trout, and fishing opportunities in the Iowa Driftless.



Scenes from the January Meetup with Caleb Schnitzler

Don't let the cooler temperatures keep you from getting out to fish. [Wisconsin Early Catch and Release Season](#) is now open in case you enjoy fishing in the cold. There is a significant change to [Wisconsin harvest season regulations](#). It will now 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 meetings.

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.

Winter Fly Tying continues on Tuesday nights through late March 2026. Both long-time tiers and beginners are welcome to join in the fun. This year we're asking folks to share with the group a pattern or two they enjoy tying and fishing. Please contact Ralph Lessor at tying@leewulfft.org to ask questions or express interest.

Please track your **volunteer hours** and report volunteer hours to the chapter treasurer by 4/10/2026 at treasurer@leewulfft.org.

Upcoming Chapter Events

- Winter Fly Tying - Tuesday evenings through late March - Village Pizza
- February Chapter Meeting - Thursday, February 19 - Village Pizza ([RSVP](#))
- March Chapter Meeting - Thursday, March 19 - Village Pizza
- April Chapter Meeting - Thursday, April 16 - Village Pizza
- Spring Driftless Outing - April 23 through April 26 - Westby WI ([click here for details and/or to RSVP](#))
- Duker School Event - May 11th - [McHenry IL](#) (Volunteers needed, email volunteer@leewulfft.org)

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

Finally, we are always seeking **volunteers** to help out the chapter. Please email me at prez@leewulfftu.org for further information. Here's an easy one - could someone take the initiative to **snap some photos at the monthly meetings**? 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.

Bob Olach's Fly of the Month

Bead Thorax Soft Hackled Nymphs and Partridge

The first time I saw a bead used between the dressing's hackle and body was in a picture emailed to me by a friend in Germany. Prior to that, I'd seen the bead at the front of the dressing, with and without a collar hackle. The picture sent to me had a pheasant tail body, gold wire ribbing, a gold bead and the a Hungarian partridge hackle.

I tied a few with the pheasant tail body and started fishing them as the point fly, New Zealand style, on a tippet attached to the hook behind a size 12 or 14 Crackleback. For a long time, this became my go-to setup when ever I fished.

After awhile, I started dressing flies with various body materials but keeping the bead behind the hackles. I became extremely fond of using various colored hare's ear dubbings, especially the Hare's Ear Plus dubbings that had Antron fibers mixed in the dubbing. I believe that the air trapped in the Antron fibers, combined with the gold bead imitated an emerging insect to the trout. I tied these flies on various sized hooks, but most of the time, I used a size 12 or 14 hook.

Bead Thorax Soft Hackled Partridge Nymphs

Hook:	Daiichi #1550 /1560 or Mustad 3906 / 3906B sizes 10-12
Thread:	Usually Orange Danville 6/0 thread
Body:	Natural, dyed, dark Hare's ear dubbings, thread or peacock herl
Tails:	Pheasant tail
Bead:	Gold
Ribbing:	Small gold wire
Hackle:	Hungarian Partridge



In October 1972, I returned from USAF tours in Vietnam and Thailand. Unfortunately, both areas were heavy Agent Orange bases and in 2018, the effects of the AO started working on me. Meds, chemo, Pluvicto, etc. all did their thing. I'm now in a nursing home in Crystal Lake as it's become too much for Joanie or my son, Michael, to care for me.. I do have some fly tying stuff with me but the days of tying 100 Crackkebacks are over.

To my camping and fishing Amigos (Salina, Pam, Tim, Kurt, Curtis (and Kaptin), Bob C. and Ray, my thanks for all the good times and memories. Hope you enjoy my flies and rods.

THANKS - I LOVE YOU GUYS !

PS - there's an opening at the Lee Wulff TU Chapter for a fly tying person to do monthly articles. No special experience or talent required as shown by the predecessor!



Grumpy's Page by Kurt Haberl

When winter swoops in and grabs everything, including your breath, like a gambler clutching all the chips on the table to his chest because he now owns everything in sight, dammit, and anyone who foolishly challenges him by going outside to walk the dog or take out trash is immediately slapped in the face. Cabin fever is bad, but cabin flu is worse. It sneaks in when the thermometer drops below zero for more than a week. It's terrible because your first thoughts are *why did I marry this woman*, and your wife is thinking *how can I kill this man and not go to prison*. The only remedy is to put on some fleece, sit in a chair with hot chocolate or something with more punch, light a fire if you can, and remember a different day, a warmer time.

While Annie went upstairs to keep her cold hands away from knives and what she could do with one, my thoughts went back to a June night, which slipped peacefully into an early morning. The usual suspects had ringed the campfire until after eleven, blowing the smoke at each other and telling lies about fish, mingled with stories that were mostly true. We straggled off to bed, lucky to find our own tents and a zipper on that tent. Sometime around 2 A.M., I slipped out of my tent to find a bush I didn't like and wanted to douse with uric acid and creatinine, and then noticed an orange glow with a few yellow tongues of flame winking up at the sky. I thought we had put the fire out, but I was wrong. On the far side of the ring I saw a single dark shadow and the flicker of a glass raised in a toast.

"That you, Grumpy?" Roy the Plumber called out in a hoarse whisper.

"I think so," I said. "Let me check. Yeah, it's me." I shuffled over and sat in a camp chair someone had left behind.

"Can't sleep?" I said.

"No, I don't want to. You remember reading about philosopher kings in your college days? I'm sort of a philosopher plumber."

"Is that a thing?"

"It is now. It's also that I was remembering the history dating back to Medieval times when they had a thing called the 'second sleep.' Because the nights were so long they had "biphasic" sleep, which was a first dead sleep until after midnight sometime, and then 'the watch,' until two or three."

"To sit around the fire," I said.

"Or talk, or do a chore or pray. Whatever. I usually just admire the stars and remind myself of what I am."

"A philosopher plumber," I said.

"Yes. But also, when I look at the stars, usually Alpha Centauri, one of the closest stars to us, maybe 4 and a half light years away, I think about how far the farthest stars are, and

how the light we're seeing was emitted before our history even began, millions and billions of years ago, and then I realize I'm merely a speck on a speck. Then the fact that I lost three flies on three consecutive casts into the same bush doesn't matter so much. It helps me to re-calibrate."

"A change of perspective," I said.

"Yes."

"How many fish did you catch today, Roy?"

"Counting the last little brookie in my earlier story that snagged itself on the side of its mouth?"

"Yes."

"One. And that one made all the difference. It makes me appreciate his eager foolishness. We are friends now. His name is Speck. I hope I see him again."

"One of the joys of fly fishing."

"Yes. You know, my wife has asked me more than once why I try to catch fish and then immediately let almost all of them go. I tell her it's like bowling. Why do guys knock down pins and then put them back up again? We try to do something that fails a lot of the time, but when it doesn't fail, it gives us something else. Do you remember J.D Salinger?"

"Yes," I said. "Catcher in the Rye. It was the first banned book I read. The librarian at my school was a nun, who gave it to me on the sly, and said, 'Read this book. It's banned and I want to know what you think about it.' I think she was just tricking me into reading more."

"She probably was. J.D. Salinger once said, 'The fact is always obvious much too late, but the most singular difference between happiness and joy is that happiness is a solid and joy is a liquid.'"

"Huh?" I said.

"Happiness stays with you because you choose it and it's always there. Joy comes and goes. You can't hold it in your hands for very long. Fly fishing is both."

"I like both."

We sat in the darkness for a long time, keeping the stars and each other good company. Good company is a wonderful place to visit when winter has clamped down on everything so that the only place to go is not outside, it's inside. I too am merely a speck on a speck. But I can remember sitting by that flickering little fire with a philosopher plumber who fly fishes, and that makes all the difference.



Protect Clean Water - Update

On Thursday, January 15th, the U.S. EPA [published a proposed rule](#) to revise the regulations related to Clean Water Act Section 401 program, which provides authority to states and tribes to regulate projects impacting state waters.

The EPA has opened a **30-day comment period**. The **deadline to comment is February 17, 2026**. [Click here to learn more and to take action](#)

Few issues are more critical to Trout Unlimited's mission than clean water. With recent actions by the Administration and the US Congress to weaken protections, we are facing one of the greatest threats to the Clean Water Act in its long and effective history. Many of you took action *just weeks ago to comment on a separate, but related proposed rule* to eliminate Clean Water Act protections for millions of acres of wetlands and stream miles ("waters of the U.S. proposed rule"). Now, the U.S. EPA has launched an additional assault on the Clean Water Act, this time taking aim at the authority of States and Tribes to protect water resources through the Section 401 water quality certification process.

Why this matters to TU / how this impacts coldwater fisheries:

CWA Section 401 grants states and tribes the right to review and certify projects that will impact water quality through discharge of pollutants. This includes small projects, and also large, interstate energy and infrastructure projects. Think pipelines, hydropower projects, and data centers. Unless the state issues (or waives) a 401 permit, a federal agency may not issue a permit for the proposed activity.

The proposed rule would significantly narrow the authority of states and tribes to review these project proposals and to place conditions as needed to protect water resources.

Ensuring a strong 401 certification process is essential to Trout Unlimited's mission as this is among the most critical tools for ensuring that proposed projects are designed and implemented in a manner that protects the coldwater resources that Trout Unlimited cares about.

TU members, and sportsmen and women nationwide, want to ***move forward with progress on cleaning up our nation's waters, not go backwards***. Please join us – again - in writing to tell the Agencies that the Clean Water Act needs to be strengthened, not weakened. [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](#).

Safeguard Sensitive Trout Habitat by Supporting Oil & Gas Reforms

Responsible energy development and conservation need not be mutually exclusive, but it depends on smart, balanced policies that support diverse public land uses.

Rolling back key oil and gas leasing reforms would jeopardize valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Please [click here](#) to join Trout Unlimited in urging Congress to keep fiscally responsible leasing reforms and steer leasing away from sensitive trout habitats.

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.](#)

TU Impacted by US Department of Government Efficiency

On March 4th, 2025 TU leaders hosted an urgent Town Hall meeting to help spread the word that US DOGE actions have already hit TU hard. Some highlights shared during the meeting:

- TU restoration projects across the country, including the [Driftless Area](#), rely heavily on government funding, with a government-to-private funding ratio of approximately 4-to-1.
- TU recently suffered unprecedented delays in receiving promised payments (~\$17 million) from government agencies for completed and ongoing TU restoration

work.

- Up to \$180 million of promised future government funding (including [TU Driftless Area Restoration Effort](#) funding) for TU projects is now paused and in question, forcing TU to put many major current and planned restoration projects on hold. While not a TU project, here is a paused conservation project that hits close to home, resulting in major negative impacts to our Great Lakes fisheries: [*"Asian Carp barrier project on Des Plaines River delayed as federal funds hang in limbo"*](#) (*WGN News video*)
- TU restoration work up until this current government funding pause has provided roughly 2,500 family-wage jobs across the US each year (staff and contractors), primarily in rural areas, and many of these jobs are now in jeopardy.

Now, possibly more than ever, is the time for TU members, friends, and family to stand up and take action. Here's what one can do to help:

1. Make a [special donation](#) to TU national. With government funding paused, your special donation will help sustain vital core TU operations and staff.
2. Get more involved locally at the grassroots level by volunteering for the Lee Wulff chapter (email volunteer@leewulfftu.org).

You can learn more about the impacts of the US DOGE on TU projects [here](#).

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

- [19th Annual Driftless Area Stream Restoration Science Symposium](#) - Onalaska, WI - February 25 - 26, 2026
- [IF4](#) screenings in the region:
 - Sheboygan Falls, WI @ Laack's Tavern and Ballroom - February 28, 2026
 - Manistee, MI @ Vogue Theatre - March 7, 2026
 - Hayward, WI @ The Park Theatre - March 21, 2026
 - Decorah, IA @ Hotel Winneshiek - April 25, 2026
- [Fly Fishing Film Tour](#) (F3T) screenings in the region:
 - Cedar Rapids, IA @ Hilton Garden Inn - March 1, 2026
 - Grand Rapids, MI @ Wealthy Theatre - March 5, 2026
 - Ann Arbor, MI @ The State Theatre - March 6, 2026
 - Des Moines, IA @ Hilton Garden Inn - March 7, 2026
 - Novi, MI @ Emagine Novi - March 12, 2026
 - Madison, WI @ The Barrymore Theatre - March 19, 2026
 - Traverse City, MI @ City Opera House - March 21, 2026
 - Lake Forest, IL @ Gorton Center - April 12th, 2026
 - Menomonie, WI @ The Mabel Tainter Theater - April 13th, 2026
 - Holland, MI @ Knickerbocker Theatre - April 15, 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 prez@leewulfft.org
Vice-President:	Ken Bruckner viceprez@leewulfft.org
Secretary:	Scott Lammers secretary@leewulfft.org
Treasurer:	Marty Jandura treasurer@leewulfft.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!