



SMITH RIVER TU NEWSLETTER

August 2022

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 20TH– Smith River Fest Run, paddle, cast, and bike your way to fun at Smith River Fest! Held annually at the Smith River Sports Complex in Henry County, Virginia, this event is truly a celebration of all things associated with the Smith River and our great outdoors

SEPTEMBER 1ST – September regular meeting. Rania's Restaurant in Martinsville. Special Guest speaker from the Bassett Swift Water Rescue team

SEPTEMBER 16-18 – Annual Virginia Council meeting at Graves Mountain Lodge

SEPTEMBER 24TH – Last trash pickup of the year. Meet at Bassett Canoe Access at 8:00 am.

In this issue...

Pg 2

President's Corner
Recent Chapter Events

Pg 3

Big News on the Philpott Dam repairs

Pg 4

DWR Survey of the Smith

Pg 5

Invasive Species

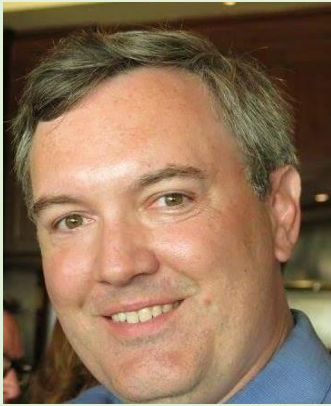
Pg 6

Graves Mountain Lodge Trip

Pg7

Chapter Officers and contact information

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Welcome to the inaugural edition of our new newsletter. If we've not met before my name is Jeff Deering. I am the current President for the Smith River chapter of Trout Unlimited. I wanted to create this newsletter to provide a more personal way to communicate with all our members. This is a work in progress so please be patient as we hone our skills and fine tune our format. If you have topics you'd like to see be included or any suggestions to improve this newsletter please let me know. Hope to see you all soon.

-Jeff Deering



Recent Chapter Events

June 10-11th South Holston Fishing trip -



About 10 members met in Tennessee for a weekend of fishing on the South Holston River. Although water levels were low the fishing and weather were good.



June 25th – Trash Pickup in Bassett. Small group of members worked hard and picked up roadside trash.

Updated News on the Philpott Dam

By Jeff Deering



Figure 1 Photo by the US Army Corps of Engineers

If you are a member of the Smith River chapter of TU you know all about the troubles Philpott Dam has faced over the past 5 or 6 years. From fires to mud slides the cards just seemed stacked against the poor dam. After a fire in 2016 that shut down one of the turbines and damaged another repairs were badly needed. The mud slide in 2020 finished the job and knocked out all generating capabilities. Since then water levels have had to be regulated without the use of the generators.

A recent article in the Martinsville Bulletin

(https://martinsvillebulletin.com/news/local/philpott-dam-to-undergo-major-repairs/article_601cb4c4-06d3-11ed-97a8-ab05647a77ae.html) detailed some of the upcoming repairs. If all work is completed as planned the dam may be operational again by 2024. While delays may push this date back a plan does finally seem to be in place and a return to generation may soon be a reality. How this may impact the Smith River's fishery will be an important topic for our leadership and members to be aware of.

The best way for the needs of anglers to be taken into account is for us to be aware of construction plans and to be actively engaged in the discussions around power generation and water release schedules. Our voices, along with those of other stakeholders in the community, need to be heard by community leaders. Speak up for our needs and listen to those of others who utilize this precious resource along with us. If we can work together we may be able to help shape the future of the river for the enjoyment of everyone for years to come.

The State of the Smith River

By Al Kittredge



Virginia DWR fisheries biologists along with DWR Complementary Work Force (CWF) and Philpott COE volunteers sampled the Smith River trout fishery from just below Philpott Dam downstream to Fieldale, July 20-21, 2022. A total of 31 miles of the river is now managed by DWR as a trout fishery. Yearly samplings to collect data help DWR make informed decisions about the management of the Smith River fishery.

The Smith River is what is known as a two-tier fishery. DWR stocks rainbows several times a year, however the main draw are stream spawned brown trout which attract fishermen from near and far who practice "catch and release". The brown trout have a size limit which protects any fish in the 10-24 inch slot from harvest. We collected a lot of brown trout which fall within this protected slot. The sample raft only sends sufficient current into the water to collect 5-7% of the fish in any given section of the stream as we float down the river. We collected over 2000 trout in our two day sample.

The 2022 Smith River sample from Philpott Dam to the Martinsville Dam is complete. We'll sample below Martinsville Dam in the fall when the water is cooler to preclude undue stress on fish in that section.

I've been on board with the Smith River for over 30 years and have seen all the highs and lows. There are more and bigger fish now than any time in the past 30 years. Sure there are still issues but that will always be the case when so many stakeholders are competing for the same resource. It's anybody's guess what will happen when the COE turbines come back on board. If we address our concerns, wants and needs now, hopefully we can arrive at a compromise that everyone can live with.

George Palmer the DWR lead biologist responsible for the Smith River will present his analysis of the health of the fishery to the public at the end of the year SRTU meeting December 1, 2022.

Invasive Fish Species

by Eric Tichay

SRTU Vice President

Virginia Council National Leadership Council (NLC) Representative

As the Chair for the National Leadership Council Native Trout Workgroup, I learned that invasive fish species are a serious threat to other fish species from Maine into the Midwest and across the nation to Washington. In Virginia invasive fish species include the northern-snakehead and Alabama bass.



Working to control invasive Asian carp in the Midwest.

Invasive fish species are nonnative species that cause, or are likely to cause, economic or ecological harm. “Nonnative” means they have been introduced by human action, intentionally or accidentally, into a region outside their natural geographic range. (Virginia Invasive Species Management Plan 2018).

Why should we care? Significant ecological and economic harm arises from invasive fish species. Ecological harm caused by invasive fish species can include near extinction of native fish species. Overall, invasive species have been found to be a top driver of extinction of species worldwide. Once fully established, many invasive species cannot be eradicated. The costs and damages associated with invasive species, including control measures, can be devastating to the economy and our natural resources.

As a result of the harm invasive fish can cause out native fish, I felt compelled to create an invasive fish information brochure. The brochure provides publication and website resources, prevention methods, the Trout Unlimited approach and more. The draft brochure will be available starting August 20 at the Smith River Fest.

UPCOMING TRIP TO GRAVES MOUNTAIN LODGE



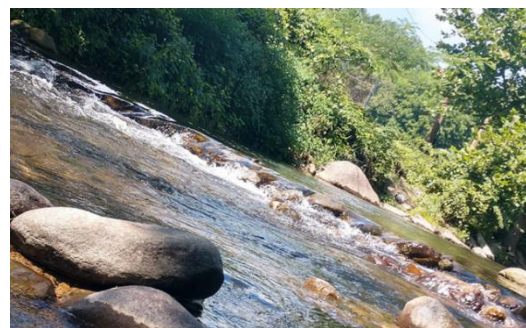
Figure 2 Graves Mountain Lodge

Join us the weekend of September 16-18 as the Virginia State Council of Trout Unlimited holds their Annual meeting. This meeting is open to all members who wish to attend. This year the meeting is being held at the Graves Mountain Lodge in Syria, VA.

One of the guest speakers will be Amy Riscassi of the University of Virginia who will present the results of the Virginia Trout Stream Sensitivity Study (VTSSS) that was conducted with SRTU member assistance in 2021.

Our chapter has rented two cabins for members to stay at. Please come on out and join us for some great fellowship, local stream trout fishing and informative speakers. Please contact Eric Tichay or Jason Collins to make your reservations now!! This should be a fun trip. I hope you can join us. Please check out their website for more information on the fishing opportunities and other amenities available.

PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS BY SEPTEMBER 5TH.



COMMUNITY CORNER

WANT TO SHARE PICTURES OF THAT GIANT BROWN TROUT YOU CAUGHT THIS SUMMER? DID YOU CATCH A RAINBOW AND SNAP THAT PERFECT SHOT OF IT JUMPING AS YOU REELED IT IN? COMMUNITY CORNER WILL BE THE PLACE WE POST SOME OF THESE PHOTOS FROM OUR MEMBERS. SO SEND US YOUR FAVORITE PICTURES WITH ANY CAPTIONS YOU'D LIKE US TO POST WITH IT AND KEEP AN EYE OUT IN FUTURE NEWSLETTERS FOR YOUR PHOTO.



Smith River Chapter

Trout Unlimited

Smithrivertu.org

Visit our Facebook group at
<http://www.facebook.com/SmithRiverTU>

For story suggestions or to share photos from your recent fishing trips please contact us at smithrivertu@gmail.com

Join our Facebook group where we share event announcements and photos.



www.facebook.com/SmithRiverTU

Smith River TU Chapter Officers

Chapter President – Jeff Dering (jdeer76@yahoo.com)

Chapter Vice President – Eric Tichay (erictichay@yahoo.com)

Jason Collins – Chapter Secretary (jaymcol81@yahoo.com)

Treasurer – Roy Ford

Board Members

Doug Jessie

Joe May

Al Kittredge