

FALL 2005

# TROUT TALK

Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited



Dedicated to Conserve, Protect & Restore West Michigan Cold Water Fisheries and their Watersheds

## DINNER SEMINARS

Friday, January 27 2006  
at the Hilton Hotel on  
28th and Patterson

**Kevin Feenstra**  
*Streamer fishing for  
steelhead on the  
Muskegon*

SWMTU  
Board Meetings  
1st Tuesday of every month  
6:00 PM

Leave Messages at:  
Voice Creel  
616-752-8596

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## Second Season 2005

by Ron Barch

**W**inter gave up its hold as usual on southwest Michigan's Coldwater River and trout began to stir in mid April. By the traditional opening day early caddis and Hendrickson's could be found in the riffles below the confluence of Tyler creek and the mainstream. The fishing was good. Afternoon hatches were reliable and evening spinners fell like clockwork. And then the weather changed!

Throughout the Midwest higher than normal temperatures and low water levels were the norm but dedicated T.U. members didn't let that keep them away from the Coldwater River. Although low water made fishing difficult those same conditions were perfect for carrying out stream improvement projects. This past summer under the direction of Paul Eberhart, a member of Schrems West Michigan T.U., that's exactly what took place.

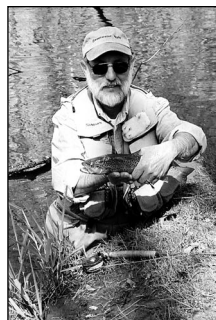
On July 30th and August 13th stream improvement and habitat restoration were performed on the Coldwater River. Using the talent, effort and resources of three Trout Unlimited chapters and a local watershed council (CRWC) erosion control, woody debris placement and trout cover installation was accomplished. What is most unique and exciting about these activities is that they were carried out through the cooperation and joint efforts of four separate organizations.



Saturday July 30th found the Dolan Property parking, located a short walk from the Coldwater River, filled to capacity. Carrying chainsaws and aircraft cable were members of Lansing's Perrin Chapter as well as volunteers from Schrems West Michigan and the Coldwater River Watershed Council. A recent grant of \$1500.00 by the Perrin Chapter to the CRWC provided the financial resources to make such projects possible. Before the day was over (and all adjourned for lunch and fishing) more than a dozen woody debris bundles were in place. A highlight of the morning's work occurred when a few T.U. members asked about and

inspected an old half log structure installed more than 15 years ago. To their surprise and pleasure a nice bunch of brown trout were calling the well worn half log their home!

Saturday August 13th will be remembered as a "special day" for those who hold the Coldwater River near and dear. Again the Dolan Property parking lot was filled to capacity but this time T.U. members had traveled all the way from Chicago! This past May members of the Oakbrook Chapter of Trout Unlimited were hosted by members of the CRWC to a day of fishing. After experiencing what one seasoned angler described as "one of the best spring openers he has had" they went back home and began organizing a work day in Michigan. The Oakbrook chapter is predominately an urban group and thus must travel to carry out TU's mission. In the past the majority of their work has taken place in Wisconsin's Driftless region. When the Oakbrook bunch arrived the group included men, women, kids and a visiting lady angler from Chile! When Paul Eberhart initially explained the scope of the project most were skeptical, one guy even mumbled "he's nuts!" By the time lunch was served the skepticism was gone and there were a lot of smiles for a job well done.



The project necessitated removing an extremely large log jamb up stream from the Dolan Property. The jamb was restricting stream flow and causing bank erosion. Chain saws, muscle and a whole lot of sweat had everything finished in time for a picnic lunch at the park in nearby Freeport. Just as the group was leaving someone looked back at what had been accomplished? Much to their satisfaction they watched as a pair of brown trout could be seen moving into the newly created pool.

Sincere thanks and appreciation must go out to the hard working volunteers from the "Bob" Perrin Chapter, Oakbrook Chapter, Schrems West Michigan and CRWC. Through partnering, cooperation and shared resources these groups are helping to insure the future of the Coldwater River. Such dedication and enthusiasm helps to make the future of all trout streams look a whole lot brighter.



## Committee Reports...

### Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited Framework for evaluation of groundwater withdrawal legislation

As Michigan Citizens and other residents of the Great Lakes Basin discuss the future of our water resources, the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited offers the following thoughts regarding what good statutory protection of our waters might look like.

1. Don't regulate withdrawals based upon arbitrarily established volumes. Different hydrologic systems have the capacity to sustain different levels of withdrawal without degradation. The goal of the regulatory scheme should not be to prevent withdrawal or human use, the goal should be to inform the person or entity wishing to make the withdrawal of the potential impacts of the withdrawal, and inform the location, timing, and nature of the withdrawal to protect the function of impacted ecosystems.
2. Recognize that the impact on natural resources systems is caused by the act of withdrawing, not by what or where the water is used after it is withdrawn. This includes potential credit for return flows. Even if 100% of withdrawn water is returned to the Great Lakes basin, if the withdrawal has interrupted the natural hydrologic cycle, especially reductions of groundwater inflows to some surface water resources, the functionality of the surface water resource is destroyed.
3. Regulatory schemes which allow for "averaging" of daily use are antithetical to natural resource protection. Regulatory regimes should be cognizant of and manage for the prevention of critical environmental conditions, like thermal spikes. A coldwater trout stream has to be cold enough for trout all the time, not 95% of the time, or on average.
4. Carefully examine the concept of "critical aquifers". In a high precipitation, heavily glaciated region like the Great Lakes Basin, there are large areas with relatively unconfined aquifers. More useful concepts for management are broader understanding of permeability of the till, mass flow of groundwater and critical base and channel forming flows of surface water, radiographic aging of water strata to determine connectivity, and the concept of "critical withdrawals".
5. Finally, as Conservationists, we need to actively promote the concept of the Resource Improvement Standard as both an ethic and a management concept. For over fifty years, hunters and anglers have paid for the conservation, protection, and restoration of the natural resources they enjoy through the purchase of licenses, habitat stamps, and special federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. There is nothing wrong with using, enjoying, and even profiting from the use of our natural resources, but the persons and entities that derive special benefit and/or profit from the use of the resources should be expected, and if necessary, compelled to exert a higher level of support for and care of these public resources.

### Dolan Property Forest Stewardship Plan

By David Smith (SWMTU Conservation Committee)

Earlier this year, the Schrems WMTU Board voted to authorize the development of a Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP), on the Dolan Property located in SE Kent County. The Dolan property is bordered by the Coldwater River and includes a portion of Tyler Creek, which runs through the property. (For more information on the Dolan Property go to [www.wmtu.org/dolan.html](http://www.wmtu.org/dolan.html)) A FSP is conducted by a professional forester to develop a long term (10 year) plan based on the objectives outlined by the property owner. As the owners of the Dolan property, our objectives are:

"To maximize plant and animal diversity; protect riparian and wetland areas; and enhance recreational and educational opportunities."

Jack Boss of King & MacGregor Environmental wrote the FSP for the Dolan property. The plan itself consists of two parts, an assessment of the property and recommendations for the future. The assessment includes topography

and soil conditions, plant and animal life, forest stands and their health, wetlands areas, and exotic and invasive species on the property. The property was split up into six "management units" based on the topography and forest and plant life within each unit. In effect the different management units are distinct ecosystems on the Dolan Property, demonstrating the unique and valuable diversity of the property.



Each management unit in the FSP has its own assessment and recommendations for the future. For the sake of brevity, I will summarize some of the major recommendations proposed by Jack Boss:

- Additional tree planting in two areas.
- Selective cutting of some mature trees in two management units.
- Expansion of several wetlands areas.
- Installation of wildlife habitat structures for birds, fish, and rabbits.
- Expansion of one of the ponds on the property.
- Installation of casting platforms on the two ponds near the entrance.
- Improvement of the trail system.
- Creation of a natural prairie.
- Creation of a wildlife food plot.

These recommendations were crafted for the purpose of meeting our objectives for the property, but it is up to the Board to analyze the FSP and



develop our own plan for the future. We need to decide how each recommendation fits within our overall vision and priorities. If you have any thoughts or comments on the FSP, or recommendations for the future of the Dolan property, please contact any WMTU board member or myself at [davidsmith@chartermi.net](mailto:davidsmith@chartermi.net). For further information, the complete FSP can be found online at the WMTU website at: [www.wmtu.org/articles/dolan\\_plan.html](http://www.wmtu.org/articles/dolan_plan.html)

## Just Beyond the Bend...

### Introducing our new board members....

#### Michael Lindley

I was born and raised in Michigan and spent many of the summers of my youth living in Northern Michigan where I learned to fish with my father and grandfather. My love of flyfishing for trout, salmon and steelhead has grown to become an obsession in the past 15 years. I've also caught the saltwater fever and travel to Florida in search of bonefish, tarpon, redbfish and permit. My fly tying skills continue to improve and I get as much enjoyment preparing for a trip and tying the flies that I'll need.

My son is now joining me on the water and I'm particularly sensitive to doing all that we can to protect our cold water fisheries for the enjoyment of our children and theirs. I've always admired the work that Trout Unlimited has done in that regard and I am honored to have an opportunity to contribute to their efforts.

In my spare time from fishing, I work as director of marketing for Huntington Banks here in West Michigan.

### SWMTU LOGO T-SHIRTS

As a fund raising effort, the chapter will be offering great looking t-shirts with the SWMTU logo. These t-shirts are high quality cotton with a chest patch embroidery of the SWMTU logo. We will have long sleeve and short sleeve t-shirts available for direct order or available at seminars. Short sleeve are \$20, long sleeve \$25. For more info, or to order a shirt, call Teresa Skye at 616-826-0367. Remember, any support of your chapter helps fund projects that directly impact your fishing enjoyment!

*new board members continued...*

**Robert Fox**

I was born and raised in West Michigan. I grew up learning the fine art of fly fishing and tying from my father and cut my teeth as a trout fisherman on waters such as the Rouge and Muskegon rivers. Fly fishing and trout fishing in particular has been an important part of my life for as long as I can remember. Even during my enlistment in the Army a fly rod accompanied me to California and Panama. Currently I hold the position of Director of Nursing at St. Ann's Home on Grand Rapids' west side. Despite being very busy with work and family fishing remains a high priority. I wanted to be a part of SWMTU board because I believe in today's world being a member of an organization is just not enough, especially when we are talking about cold water fisheries. Let's face it, to the average person this is a concern that is likely non-existent. Those of us who are passionate about the sport we love need to make sure our voices and ideas are heard.

**Andy Milnes**

As an avid Fly Fisherman I'm excited to be a part of SWMTU. As we all know our organization helps support a variety of environmental concerns and as a board member I plan to assist with the continued direction of SWMTU. Personally, I'm a business owner in the Grand Rapids area and married with three children. I've been hooked on Fly Fishing for a number of years and hope to encourage new membership by sharing the positive experiences that our organization can bring.

**JR Hartman**

I have been an avid fly angler and member of Trout Unlimited since 1999. After a three-year job relocation to St. Louis Missouri, my family moved back to West Michigan and I vowed to get more involved in Trout Unlimited. For those of you who have been to St. Louis, you can understand my frustration with trying to match-the-hatch on the Mississippi River; we are truly blessed here in West Michigan to have an abundance of coldwater fisheries in which to enjoy.

I was not sure what "more involved" meant, but I started by attending some of the many events that SWMTU hosts. It was at these functions that I met many current board members, and had the opportunity to ask questions. Well I guess I asked too many, and in early 2005 I was asked to accept a nomination to the board. Which I very willingly did, also accepting the role of treasurer and a seat on the membership committee.

As a new board member to SWMTU my goals are to increase membership and membership participation, through education, conservation projects, and events. Be fiscally responsible with the allocation of our assets. Promote the sport of fly fishing, the practice of catch-and-release, and become a better steward of our coldwater fisheries. Please do not hesitate to contact myself, or any of the board members with suggestions, comments, or questions. I look forward to serving as an officer on your SWMTU Board.

 **Just Beyond the Riffles...**

**FISHING STREAMERS FOR STEELHEAD**

*By Dick Smith*

**W**hen steelhead come up the large rivers of Western Michigan in the fall, they are inclined to lie close to the bottom, near one of the main lines of current where they take up a resting or holding position. Those current lines can be identified easily because that is where the bubbles concentrate on the surface.

In the fall, steelhead like water that is about three feet deep and moving at about three feet per second on the surface. The water is flowing more slowly near the bottom and the fish can rest comfortably there. If there is a place in that holding water where there are little waves on the surface that don't move downstream with the current, that is the most likely place for the steelhead to be. That type of water is ideal for streamer fishermen.

You can fish a lot of water with a streamer by casting it across and letting it swing downstream with the current. But the best way is to concentrate on having the fly doing exactly what you want it to do when it gets to where you expect the steelhead to be. That means the fly should be pointing generally upstream, and it should not be going very fast. It should not be following a bow in the line, and with a floating line it sometimes takes several mends to get the fly down and keep the bow out of the line.

Letting a streamer run downstream along the edge of the current behind a bow in your line is a good technique for smallmouths, and it sometimes works very well on big browns, but it is not the most likely way to catch steelhead. It should be tried before you move on, but the fly should generally be fished dead drift and sinking as it goes downstream, until it gets to where it will swing around below you on a nearly straight line. The most likely time for a fish to take is when the fly begins to come up from near the bottom and to swing around below you with the current.

Fishing streamers for steelhead in the fall can be done with a floating line, if you add a moderate amount of weight to the leader, or you can use a sinking line. One that sinks from three to six inches per second will work fine.

When fishing streamers with a floating line, I typically use a two-piece leader. I use a butt section of about four feet of .017 nail knotted to line. I tie a small swivel to that, and attach my tippet of about two and a half feet of eight or ten pound test to the swivel.

Normally I wrap some lead wire around the swivel to get the amount of weight I want. Split shot works pretty well if it is attached to the heavy butt section, but even when it is clamped down tightly, it still comes off while you are making long casts, or when the fly gets hung up and the line is stretched and then suddenly comes free.

Most of my steelhead fishing is done with a nine-foot, eight-weight rod.

If I was to pick one all around color combination for a streamer, it would be yellow and gold. It works all year, and it attracts every kind of gamefish in Michigan. But in the fall, the most productive combination for steelhead has been white and silver. If you have a favorite smelt imitation about two and half to three and a half inches long, it will be a good steelhead fly in the fall.

My favorite is a modified form of the blond series of streamers developed years ago by Joe Brooks. The most productive of that type of fly that I have used is tied this way.

**Tail:** White bucktail extended about two and a half inches out behind the hook. The bucktail is tied down solidly, nearly the full length of the hook shank, and it is the base over which the body is tied.



**Body:** Silver mylar tubing wrapped over the tightly tied bucktail. The string inside the tubing is taken out and the tubing is wrapped over the body as though it was thick, strong tinsel.

**Throat:** Silver flashabou that reaches almost to the hook bend. Take half the amount of flashabou you think would look good on the fly and cut it twice as long as you want it. Tie the flashabou in near the middle of the clump. Wrap the thread over it about eight times and then double the flashabou back and tie it in solidly. That way the slippery flashabou will never pull out.



**Wing:** Gray squirrel tail tied the length of the hook shank. The wing has to be short enough so it will never foul on the hook bend when you are casting. Tie it down solidly. Do not try to make a nice short trim head. Squirrel tail is another slippery material and it requires a lot of good tight wraps to keep it in place.



The head on a size-two streamer should be about a quarter of an inch long.

A yellow and gold fly of the same pattern can be tied using yellow bucktail, gold mylar tubing, gold flashabou, and a fox squirrel wing.

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

To conserve, protect and restore West Michigan's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds and to provide a forum for the exchange of information concerning coldwater fisheries and the techniques and the sport of trout fishing.

**SWMTU EVENT CALENDAR****January 27, 2006- Dinner Seminar**

**Kevin Feenstra** will talk about steelhead fishing the Muskegon River with streamer patterns. Kevin is a West Michigan guide who's on the rivers 250 days a year. He considers himself a traditionalist and prefers to swing flies in the time-honored West Coast manner. Most of his steelhead fishing involves swinging flies of his own design on a sinking-tip line.

**February 2006 (date TBD)- Dinner Seminar**

**John Miller** is a guide on the Muskegon River and a master bug photographer. He'll talk to us about the changing hatches on the river and share his amazing photographs of insect life. You'll be wowed at how he raises bugs in aquariums for up-close photography.

 **Last Cast...****BOOK REVIEWS***Reviewed by Ron Barch***Great Lakes Steelhead A Guided Tour for Fly Anglers**By Bob Linsenman and Steve Nevala • *Backcountry Publications, 1995, 309 pages*

I was originally attracted to the book Great Lakes Steelhead because I was interested in updating my steelheading techniques. The days of chuck and duck angling on an uncrowned stretch of the Pere Marquette during the first week of April are a thing of the past. Times change and I needed a refresher course. Linsenman and Nevala, in their comprehensive book provided just what the doctor ordered, and then some!

Great Lakes Steelhead is divided into three sections or parts. Like other books on the subject the authors offer the reader in Part I a thorough discussion of current angling techniques for Great Lakes anadromous rainbows as well as all the basic fundamentals. Part III titled The Water deals with the major tributaries of the Great Lakes which host good runs of steelhead trout. What is new and unique is found in Part II. This section of the book provides summaries of a day on the water with some of the best guides in the business. By sharing their experiences with 16 knowledgeable steelhead guides Linsenman and Nevala allow the reader to peak over their shoulder and enjoy the game of chasing steelhead. By doing so the angler benefits by not only gaining from years of experience but also listening to unique personal insights into the often frustrating sport of angling for steelhead. As I began reading Part II of Great Lakes Steelhead I soon realized I was learning from the best of the best.

If you're like me and need to update your steelheading skills or are an accomplished "Chromer" fanatic wishing to hone your skills then Great Lakes Steelhead is for you. Finally, as a member of Trout Unlimited I found the book's dedication of special interest. Before the authors instruct or inform they take the time to say right up front, and I quote: "This book is dedicated to those individuals who take an active role in protecting steelhead and their environment, to those who contribute advocacy, time, energy, and resources to the future of the sport. To those of you who make a difference, this book is for you."

Misters Linsenman and Nevala, my hat's off to you! Thanks for a good book and an important message.

**2005-06 COMMITTEES:** Conservation- Paul Eberhart, Chair- Dick Smith, Ron Barch, Dave Smith, Bradley Boomstra,  
Membership/Education- Cregg Start, Chair- Dick Smith, Ron Barch, Dave DeJonge, Dave Smith, JR Hartman, Andy Milnes  
Fundraising- Eric Starck, Chair- Jim Scott, Teresa Skye, Larry Risbridger, Robert Fox, Michael Lindley  
State Council- Paul Eberhart, Ron Barch



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