

TROUT TIMES



**Vanguard
Chapter**

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ADOPTION PROCESS GOING JUST FINE

By John Sabina

LAKEVILLE—Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) is a Clinton River Watershed Council program that empowers community members to protect local streams and rivers through water quality monitoring.

Volunteers are assigned sites and teams, given equipment, data sheets and protocols, and sent out to gather information on streamside habitat and macroinvertebrate populations. Vanguard has supported the AAS with three teams for several years.

Twice a year (in May and October), teams visit their adopted sites and collect data, including physical information (such as streambank erosion and surrounding land use). They collect and identify macroinvertebrates (commonly known as “bugs”) that live in the streambed and surrounding vegetation.

Different bugs need specific conditions to survive and reproduce. Some are very pollution sensitive while others can tolerate highly

polluted water. A stream’s health can be determined by the number and types of bugs that live in it.

CRWC, municipalities, and the State of Michigan use the data to assess the health of its streams and to make decisions regarding their protection and restoration.

In October, the team lead by Larry Walla met at our assigned location on Stony Creek just below Lakeville Lake. Joining our leader were Shari Walla, Jeff Walla, and John Sabina. Our 100-foot segment for sampling and observation is in a nature preserve area known locally as the Lakeville Swamp.

Stony Creek is small but rather scenic in this area. By answering some habitat and land use multiple-choice questions and collecting bug samples using nets in the stream, we provide the CRWC with their requested data.

While one set of sampling data is very specific and difficult to really

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interpret by itself, a large collection of data for multiple locations at regular intervals is quite useful to define the big picture of watershed health.

The Vanguard teams sample on the first weekend in May and the first weekend in October each year. Teams ideally have six to eight members to insure that three to four people are available at the designated times over the long haul.

Sampling sessions are typically done on a Saturday morning and generally take two to three hours. Getting “up close and personal” with a portion of the watershed is fun and rewarding to know that you are contributing to the solution of water quality issues.

Other Vanguard members or friends who would like to join the effort should contact one of the three Vanguard captains: Dave Watson, Frank Penkala, or Larry Walla.



AQUACULTURE'S VENTURE INTO TROUBLED WATERS

By Joe Barker



OKEMOS—The next issue of Michigan Trout magazine (Winter 2016), the quarterly publication of Michigan Trout Unlimited, should be out shortly before or just after the first of the year. In it will appear an article I've written regarding one aspect of the aquaculture debate, that being recirculating aquaculture systems.

I won't go into detail regarding the substance of that article. I'll leave it up to you to read it. However, in a nutshell, it is based upon an interview I conducted with aquaculture shrimp farmer, Russ Allen, of Farm Fresh Seafood in Okemos.

As far as aquaculture is concerned, recirculating systems such as Allen's is the least threatening to any of Michigan's waterways. While openly opposing any type of open net farming of fish in the Great Lakes, and taking a tough stance against flow-through systems such as that proposed at the former Grayling Fish Hatchery, Michigan TU tacitly approves recirculating aquaculture as a safer alternative.

There is little doubt that aquaculture is a necessary supplement to harvesting wild caught fish, which alone is not sustainable as a food source.

Both open net and flow-through systems dump wastes and undesirable chemicals into the waters that they utilize to raise fish for market. In contrast, recirculating systems typically rely upon their own water supply from wells that is recirculated through their tanks, typically housed indoors, after being cleaned by filters and reoxygenated.

Besides eliminating the dumping of wastes and chemicals in lakes and streams, there is no concern with recirculating systems regarding escapement of genetically inferior fish to compromise wild fish.

The interview with Allen was one that almost didn't take place. Allen has previously been quoted in various news outlets as an opponent of open pen netting. That has gotten him in some hot water with fellow members of the Michigan Aquaculture Association,

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whose president, Dan Vogler, is the same person who proposes to operate the Grayling Fish Hatchery as a commercial venture and who is touting the use of the Great Lakes for open pen fish farming, a venture he appears to be testing the water for his own economic gain.

Allen initially refused to return my phone calls inquiring about his willingness to do an article about his views and experience regarding aquaculture. After a couple weeks passed, he contacted me indicating that he had probably said enough already and was “too busy” to do anything now.

At the suggestion of Michigan TU Executive Director Bryan Burroughs, I later forwarded Allen a link to a debate on WKAR radio in November between Burroughs and Vogler on aquaculture.

Of particular interest in the debate was the swipe that Vogler took at recirculating aquaculture in support of his argument that open pen fish farming should be allowed in the Great Lakes.

According to Vogler, recirculating systems were of limited utility for the fish farming industry, in part because of the cost of equipment. That obviously raised the ire of Allen, who then consented to a short interview.

Both Vogler and Allen obviously have economic incentives for taking the positions they do. In a sense they are competitors in the same industry, albeit not directly since at the moment one raises fish and the other shrimp. But they are competing for the future of aquaculture.

If open pen and flow-through systems prevail and can be utilized in Michigan waters, they make recirculating

aquaculture economically unviable to raise finned fish in closed systems, which Allen insists the technology exists to do.

Allen’s problem, and that for most recirculating aquaculturists, is capital. Because of the cost of equipment, as long as there are cheaper alternatives for fish farming, at the risk of the environment and waterways, there will be little investment in recirculating systems.

Allen also blames the bad publicity that has accompanied Vogler’s support



for open pen farming and his plans to ramp up fish production at the Grayling Fish Hatchery for creating a hostile environment for all aquaculture activities, including his own.

As Allen said during our interview, “I’ve warned Dan Vogler and Kent Herrick and all these other people for years, going back two or three years, that trying to pursue this was going to open a can of worms that the unintended consequences are going to be something that none of us knew. And they were probably all going to be bad.”

[Kent Herrick runs a nonprofit near Ann Arbor that has experimented with raising perch and he too supports large-scale fish farming on the Great Lakes].

One of those bad unintended consequences Allen sees is legislation proposed in Michigan by Senator Rick Jones that would ban net pen aquaculture

in the Great Lakes and their connecting streams, which Michigan TU supports.

However, by broadly including aquaculture on all tributaries of the Great Lakes, which appears aimed at the activities at the Grayling hatchery, Allen believes the legislation would be putting the entire aquaculture industry out of business in Michigan.

“I think it goes a little bit too far. EPA years ago got sued by the environmental community about the Clean Water Act and aquaculture based on years and millions of dollars to come up with a whole set of new rules that pertain to aquaculture and what we have to do and what we don’t have to do. I think they’re very good rules, I think they were science based, and I think that pretty much everybody in the United States in aquaculture has adjusted to them and follow them.”

Those EPA rules, however, didn’t address open pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes, but Allen thinks it may never have to. “[Open pen aquaculture] is always going to be a controversial issue. I quite frankly don’t think it ever will get done, I hope it doesn’t, but what it’s done is fractured our aquaculture community. It’s not helping in Lansing to further new projects, there aren’t going to be any new projects of any kind until all this stuff is straightened out.”

That probably explains why Allen is willing to accept Bryan Burroughs’ invitation to meet face-to-face, which as yet they’ve never done. The sense is Allen would want to do his own politicking to get support from TU, or at least have minimal opposition, for his recirculating aquaculture.

Another interesting aspect of the interview with Allen is that despite finding himself on the opposite side of the fence with Vogler on the issue of

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open pen aquaculture, they do share a history of working together.

Allen joined Vogler in meetings with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality during the Michigan Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems [MPDES] permitting process for the Grayling hatchery. That permit was approved, but is being challenged by Anglers of the Au Sable, whose challenge has the support of Michigan TU.

Allen’s observations about that permit are interesting since they don’t necessarily jive with his own economic interests and even though they don’t align with Michigan TU’s position. So take them for what they may be worth.

“It was a lot more complicated than Dan [Vogler] thought. Dan tried to be up front with the community there about what was going on. I personally don’t think that his MPDES permit is out of bounds. I think that it’s pretty much in line with the U.S. EPA guidelines that they’ve developed. So I don’t think that the operation in Grayling would have the impact that the fishermen and everybody think it would.”

Hopefully, Allen’s optimism about the impact is correct if the challenge to the permit fails and the Grayling Fish Hatchery goes into full fish farming production.

Paint Creek Woody Debris Removal #2

By Jeff Gerwitz

ROCHESTERHILLS—Vanguard participated in the second woody debris removal of the year on Paint Creek, along with Clinton Valley TU and the Clinton River Watershed Council. This site, identified during our survey early this summer, was just south of Silverbell Road and as you can see from the pictures this was quite an undertaking.

It took almost four hours for the crew of about two dozen people to remove the logjam, that was originally caused by a couple large trees that had fallen across the stream during a storm.

Two chainsaws were utilized, along with a lot of muscle, to help move and remove the debris that had formed behind the downed trees.

Everything went according to plan. The only missteps occurred when a couple participants unexpectedly found themselves over the tops of their waders in some of the deeper parts of the creek.

Trees that fall into a river play a major role in a healthy river system. Large woody debris in a river creates habitat diversity for fish and

other aquatic organisms, facilitates the transport of sediment, and can help prevent stream bank erosion by absorbing erosive forces of high stream flows.

However, large woody debris (LWD) can also create upstream impoundments, massive log jams, and redirection of water flow. These types of changes can often result in problems for communities and streamside property owners.

The CRCW has initiated a “Woody Debris Focus Group” to educate communities and individuals about LWD and direct efforts to remediate problem areas. The CRCW seeks to minimize LWD problems while maintaining the benefits wood provides to a stream.

Six Vanguard Chapter members, including Jeff Gerwitz, Eli Stanesa, Al Wood, John Sabina, Mike Behm, and his son Mike Jr., joined other volunteers in this removal activity.

There will be more debris removal next summer so if you are interested in helping just watch your emails and our website.

BEFORE:



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TROUT TIMES

Published quarterly by the Vanguard Chapter Trout Unlimited.

**Larry Butts, President
Joe Barker, Editor**

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AFTER:



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Join me for a float trip to experience the best in Michigan fly fishing on one of our beautiful rivers using the finest gear Sage ONE, Z-Axis, TCX, Xi3 & Winston BIII, BII-SX fly rods, Abel & Sage reels and Rio fly lines. March warm ups are excellent times to trout fly fish on the South Branch of the AuSable, The Big Waters below Mio and the upper Au Sable River. March, April and May is Spring steelhead fly fishing on the lower Au Sable River & Betsie River and huge lake brown trout on the shoreline of Lake Huron. April, May and June are great times for fly fishing the Big Waters of the AuSable River below Mio for trophy trout. Look for salmon to start moving into the Betsie River in early August and lasting till early October. Fall is back to Steelhead on the lower Au Sable and huge trophy brown trout on the shoreline of Lake Huron.

Any questions or to book your trip – just email at kelly@michiganstreamside.com or call at 989-889-5374.



Vanguard Fly Tying with Lefty

By Jeff Gerwitz

ROCHESTER HILLS— The fly for this last month’s fly tying session was Lefty’s Deceiver.

This is one of the most popular saltwater flies, but can also be tied in a smaller version for trout and bass. The larger version would also be good for pike. December 17th is the next session and the fly will be some sort of Christmas fly. Stop by to find out which one.

If you have not been to one yet, fly tying is held on the third Thursday of each month at Avery’s Tavern at 7:30 p.m. Stop by and tie or just talk fishing and enjoy a cold beer.

Avery’s Tavern is located in the shopping center at the northwest corner of Crooks Road and M-59. All materials will be provided. Bring your vise and tools if you have them. Our Chapter has several sets of tying equipment that can be used by participants. Experienced tyers, total beginners, and all experience levels in between are welcome at these sessions. Please stop by and join in the fun!

FISHING EXPO WILL BE HERE IN NO TIME

By Joe Barker

WARREN—While we have yet to see much in the way of wintery weather, it’s not too early to start thinking about a sure sign of spring.

That would be the Midwest Fly Fishing Expo at Macomb Community College at 12 Mile and Hayes in Warren on Saturday and Sunday, March 12 and 13, 2016.

The Vanguard Chapter will again be occupying a booth, selling raffle tickets as part of its most significant fundraising effort of the year. Money raised during the Expo will finance most of the conservation activities of the Chapter and support its donations to other worthy conservation organizations and causes.

This year’s raffle tickets will cost \$5 each, an increase from prior years. However, there will be three opportunities to win rather than two. First prize will be a weekend for two at Riverview Lodge on the Au Sable River, second prize will be a Simms Headwater Hip Pack, and third prize will be a framed matted print by artist Becca Schlaff

Vanguard Fly Tying will be sharing the Chapter booth and selling trout-catching guaranteed flies. Those prices have not changed in over a decade; \$1 each or a dozen flies for \$10.

These are not cheap, foreign made flies from some third world country using child or prison labor. Yours truly ties and field tests all the flies before putting them on the market for sale. Each year, there are a few new favorites discovered during fishing trips from the past year.

If you haven’t gone to the Expo before, you don’t know what you’re missing!

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President's Corner

By Larry Butts



Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah and Happy New Year! May the season find you healthy, happy, and warm with our best wishes for 2016.

Our membership has grown significantly this year and our activities are growing with environmental projects, education, fly tying, and activism in support of conservation in our state and communities.

As you know, the sale of raffle tickets, to be drawn at the annual Midwest Fly Fishing Expo in March is our major fund raising effort, with the money going to support our conservation projects and educational efforts.

This year we will have three drawings and three prizes. The first drawing is for a weekend for two at the Au Sable Riverview Lodge and Cabins,

across from McMasters Bridge and was donated by them.

The second drawing is for a Simms Headwaters Hip Pack donated by the Old Au Sable Fly shop.

The third drawing is for a framed and matted print donated by the artist, Becca Schlaff.

In addition to our annual project in the Pigeon River area, this past year we worked with the Clinton River Watershed Council to complete a survey of the gear restricted section of Paint Creek and conducted two projects to remove large blockages from fallen trees.

This next season we plan to do more projects in Paint Creek and in our home waters. This is why I am asking each and every member to purchase a raffle ticket or two to help us raise the necessary funds for this work.

For your convenience you can purchase these on-line through PayPal and at our monthly meetings. Details are available on our website.

In our last Trout Times we brought the issues surrounding aquaculture or "fish farming" to the attention of our

readers. It is a real problem and it is moving forward with strong backing from state agriculture interests despite concerns raised by conservation groups and our state DNR.

I would encourage you to look into the data on this and in particular the problems that Canadian operators have had with these types of operations from genetically engineered fish escaping and competing with wild fish for food and resources.

The effluent of feces, uneaten food pellets, and antibiotics are flushed into the streams and rivers damaging the environment.

If your research causes you to agree with our concerns, I would encourage you to write your state representatives and make your voice heard.

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