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TROUT TIMES



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MASSIVE BEAVER DAM ATTACKED DURING WORK WEEKEND

By Joe Barker



VANDERBILT— More than a dozen Vanguard Chapter volunteers braved a steady rain to “de-construct” the remnants of a massive beaver dam on the Black River during this year’s mid-August work weekend in the Pigeon River Country State Forest. The project was organized by Larry Walla and led by members and volunteers from the Upper Black Restoration Committee and the Michigan Department of Natural

Resources, including Committee Chair Carol Rose and Tim Cwalinski, DNR Senior Fisheries Biologist.

Prior to the arrival of the Vanguard crew, the recently active and solid wood and silt dam had been breached to slowly lower the five acre impoundment that had been created. The dam prevented both the upstream and downstream migration of trout attempting to escape

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typical rising summer water temperatures. It also prevented access by trout upstream of the dam to critical spawning gravel beds below. By removing the dam and lowering the water level in stages, the project minimized the release of silt captured by the dam that could compromise the downstream spawning sites.

A drone fitted with a camera had provided a bird’s eye view of the extent of the lowlands flooded by the beaver activity just within the last year before the start of the project. Seven beavers, one weighing as much as forty pounds, were unceremoniously removed from the site before the dam was initially breached by the UBRC and the MDNR.

Vanguard members removed woody debris from the dam and helped open up more channels at the site so that the river itself could further recapture its original watercourse. A chainsaw was needed to remove some of the larger pieces. Remnants of the dam

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were floated downstream to create and reconstruct streambank structures to channel the river and provide cover for its renowned brook trout population.

By noon, the eager beaver crew of volunteers could claim success as the last remaining channel of the river that had been dammed was breached by shovels, picks, and brawn. Soon afterwards, the river was already beginning to carve away the silty remnants.

As the sun finally broke through the clouds, the crew was rewarded with a streamside lunch provided by the UBRC. Plenty of time remained for chapter volunteers to spend the rest of the afternoon testing their fly fishing skills on the trout of the Black and nearby Pigeon River.

On Saturday evening, a scrumptious dinner was provided to volunteers by the Chapter at the Staff House located within the Pigeon River Country State Forest, which provided members with rustic accommodations for the weekend.

If you weren't able to participant in this year's work weekend, you can look forward to the opportunity next year when the Vanguard Chapter will again assist in further conservation activities on the Black River watershed.

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Jeff Gerwitz, President
Joe Barker, Editor

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Jeff Gerwitz



As I'm sitting here thinking about what we want to accomplish this year, I'm wondering about what we all have in common. Why did we join Trout Unlimited? Is it our love of fly fishing, or our need to give back through conservation, or to be with other people with like interests, or all of the above?

I joined TU about twelve years ago because I got involved with fly fishing. My sister and brother-in-law took me fly fishing one summer after my daughter's wedding. After a couple of days, I thought it was the dumbest thing I had ever done. The only thing that came close was cross-country skiing (way too slow). I was hooking trees and bushes, and myself.

But eventually, I hooked a trout. I had never caught a trout or seen one up close. It was a lot prettier than the bullheads and carp that I had caught as a kid. I also noticed that I was in a really beautiful place. Not sitting in a boat with speed boats whizzing by. I was surrounded by trees and running water. Something you would see in a travel magazine. I thought – maybe there's something to this. So I kept at it on my own, which is not the best way to learn how to fly fish.

Eventually, I stopped by the Clinton River Watershed Council to find out about local trout fishing spots and

ended up meeting Dan Keifer, a long-time Vanguard Chapter member. He spent quite a bit of time with me and I left with a bag full of literature. He recommended getting in touch with Trout Unlimited and the Vanguard Chapter, which I did. I attended a few meetings and liked what I saw. If nothing else, I met a few fishing buddies. And twelve years later here I am - president. I'm not sure if this is fate or just temporary insanity.

So what do I want to do this year? I know I want to make Paint Creek a better coldwater fishery. I want to fish more and learn how to fish better. And I hope to meet a few new fishing friends.

What do you want to do? This is your chapter to do with what you want and it offers a lot of opportunities. We will provide ample opportunities to assist with conservation projects; as we are continuing our efforts to increase our conservation projects. Vanguard Chapter's Conservation Chair Eli Stanesa and I are meeting now to plan new projects for next spring and summer. Let us know if you have a particular project in mind.

We will also work to fish more and help the beginners learn how to fish better. Fly fishing is a little more complicated than drowning worms and TU is the best place that I know that offers unlimited learning experiences.

So if you have some ideas or just want to get more involved, don't be shy. Let us know what you want out of Vanguard this year.

And as I read in an article in TU National's Trout Magazine this summer – "...let's do stuff and have fun".





Vanguard Members Participate in Dam Removal on Paint Creek

By Eli L. Stanesa, Director/Conservation Chairman

ROCHESTER HILLS— Members of the Vanguard Chapter who fish the upper part of Paint Creek between the village of Lake Orion and Clarkston Road likely are familiar with the several concrete dams and other man-made impediments located in the stream. Most of these structures are decades old, placed there by the riparian land owners. For years they have been documented for removal by various civic and conservation groups.

The purpose of these structures is not always known and the benefits produced by them, if any, are minimal. In addition to being unsightly, these structures restrict the flow of fish and other aquatic life, contribute to temperature increases in the water, and result in accumulations of sediment behind them.

One of these structures was a dam that existed about a quarter of a mile below Lake Orion, a short distance downstream from the bridge at Goldengate Street. This dam consisted of large pieces of broken concrete debris

extending 35 or 40 feet completely across the creek. It severely restricted the flow of water creating a small pond and raising the water level behind it. There was no apparent reason for the dam.

This fall on a rainy Saturday morning in September (9/17), six members of the Chapter joined with Clinton Valley Chapter members and Clinton River Watershed Council (CRWC) ecologist Matt Einheuser to remove this dam. The dam removal required a DEQ permit, which was obtained by the CRCW as part of the Clinton River Coldwater Conservation Project. Vanguard volunteers included Scott Hummon and his daughter Morgan, Al Wood, Jeff Michalek and his son Bryan, and this writer.

The work required the concrete pieces to be broken up using a jackhammer. Operating the jackhammer was backbreaking work and was shared by the five or six younger and stronger volunteers. After breaking up the concrete, it was carried out of the stream by hand and loaded on to a truck. The CRWC arranged for the jackhammer.

Orion Township provided the truck and arranged for the concrete disposal. Natural rocks that were part of the dam were removed but left on the banks to aid in its stabilization. Some large woody debris was floated downstream and placed on the banks above the high water level. The work was finished in less than three hours.

The effect on the stream was immediate and significant. The water flow increased, the small pond created by the dam disappeared, and the water level dropped. Although some sediment behind the dam was released, the rate of dissipation steadily declined, and three weeks after the dam was removed the flow of water was steady and clear.

SUMMARY OF CRWC MEETING

By Eli L. Stanesa

ROCHESTER HILLS— On Tuesday, October 11, I met with Matt Einheuser, ecologist with the Clinton River Watershed Council, to discuss potential conservation projects for 2017. My notes follow:

- The dam removal at Goldengate Road was reviewed by the DNR and they were very satisfied with the results.
- DNR has suggested that additional large woody debris (LWD) work be deferred until spring so as not to interfere with spawning this fall.
- I offered that the final leg of the LWD survey from Tienken Road to the Clinton River will be completed by Vanguard members late spring next year.
- CRWC will hold a meeting in December with DNR, and local TU chapters to set priorities for 2017 LWD cleanup work.
- CRWC is planning several sizeable planting projects for 2017 and will solicit volunteers from local TU Chapters. I offered that Vanguard

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would be very interested and that CRWC could rely on our support.

- CRWC is very interested in obtaining additional data regarding Gallagher Creek, which is a tributary of Paint Creek. This creek supported brook trout until about five years ago and CRWC is interested in restoring that condition.
- DNR is pushing installation of wader wash stations on Paint Creek. After initial installation, they require routine service.
- Access work will need to be identified by our members or others. CRWC does not have any priorities. If the work is above the normal high water mark, no permits are required. However, the Trail Commission will need to be contacted.
- Other than Orvis and Michigan Fly Fishers Club, no new possibilities for grant money were identified.

I look forward to discussing these points at our next board meeting on 10/27.

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Nestled on the scenic Au Sable River, the lodge is over 3,000 square feet with 7 bedrooms & 3.5 baths accommodating over 12 guests comfortably. Also, six cabins each with a kitchen, full bathroom, porch, television, and gas grill.

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- Hiking, Biking & Skiing
- Hunting & Fishing
- Family Fun & Recreation
- Golfing
- Bird Watching

Adopt-a-Stream: Stony Creek Team, Fall 2016

By Larry & Shari Walla

LAKEVILLE— The Clinton River Watershed Council (CRWC) facilitates a biannual river assessment program known as Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) where volunteer teams collect specific data. Each team captain picks up a data collection kit from the CRWC, on specific dates in the spring and fall, and organizes his team to meet at their assigned stretch of stream. After the stream assessment is done, he returns everything to the CRWC along with the data for them to process.



Our team's assignment is the headwaters of the Stony Creek in Lakeville. The stream at this point is a narrow slow-moving tailwater of the Lakeville Lake dam. It is the same stream that eventually makes up the lakes at Stony Creek Metro Park and is a tributary of the Clinton River.

We collect two types of data. One type is environmental data, where we measure the depth and width of the stream, the temperature of the air and water, and describe the streambed substrate and the land surrounding the stream. The second type of data (and our

favorite) is a collection of the stream entomology. We scuff and shuffle along the riverbed, similar to dancing the Twist, a couple of feet upstream of a fine mesh net to gather any aquatic life present.

As with any scientific study, we do this for a prescribed amount of time to control the amount of data collected. Then we take all the detritus we collect off the stream and sift through it with the tools the CRWC provides to identify aquatic insects and other aquatic life,

such as fish, scuds, crayfish, frogs, snails, and clams.

This past fall we observed that our stream was deeper than usual, probably due to the rain events of the prior week, and we collected much fewer and smaller bugs in the stream, but more crayfish (six in total) than normal. Thanks to Matt Walla's young eyes, we even identified two snail-case caddisfly nymphs. They are so small that we had to look at them under a microscope to positively identify them.

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STONY

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We also captured one beautifully colored rainbow darter in our nets. Typically, we collect plenty of scuds and an assortment of mayfly, stonefly, and damsel fly nymphs, but have identified some unusual nymphs such as a chimney builder caddisfly nymph.

The CRWC compiles all the data from the different teams to assess the health of each stream and decides what direction they should focus their efforts. They are always looking for more AAS team volunteers.

The Vanguard Chapter currently has three teams. If you would like to become a member of one of these teams or start a team of your own, contact the CRWC at www.crwc.org or our chapter president. His information can be found at www.vanguardtu.org.

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Memorandum of an Elderly Fly Fisher

By Joe Swantek

Fishing log date: Saturday Morning, August 13, 2005: 7:30 a.m.

Arrived at the South Platte River Cheeseman Canyon parking area in Colorado at 7:30 a.m. There were a few cars in the parking area when we arrived. The weather was mostly cloudy and cool. After packing our boots, waders, and rain gear into our backpacks, we hiked in about a mile and a half and then hiked down to the lower end on the south ridge of the canyon, which is about a quarter mile upstream of the Wigwam Club's private property enclosure.

It's always a pleasure to hike into the canyon because it's so beautiful, wild, and peaceful, although it's becoming more difficult as we age.

We each started with a two fly setup of a #18 Brassie and a #20 green RS-2 nymph. On Larry's first cast he caught a beautiful 18 inch rainbow on the Brassie and repeated that with two other rainbows of 17 and 16 inches out of the same run.

On my initial attempt, I caught a small brown trout and hooked and lost a large rainbow out of a fast run on a size

#20 RS-2 sparkle nymph just upstream of Larry by the large boulder off the trail leading down to the river.

Larry moved downstream and proceeded to catch and release three more heavy bodied rainbows of 16, 14, and 15 inches, all on the Brassie. We then moved further downstream to our favorite run and we both got into fish after only a few casts. I hooked and released a heavy 17 inch bow and hooked and lost another rainbow on--you guessed it—a #20 Brassie.

On his way back upstream, I spotted three feeding fish eating Blue-wing Olives in a fast run across from another large boulder and hooked three, landing two of them on a size #20 Olive CDC using a 6x tippet. One of them was a 16 inch rainbow and the other a 15 inch brown trout. I also tagged a large brown trout in the large pool upstream of our fishing hole and a smaller brown trout after changing to a PMD dry fly.

While I was gone, Larry had fantastic success of his own. He used a Parachute Blue-wing Olive and caught

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ELDERLY

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and released three large rainbows eating Olives out of thin water. One of them took him downstream about 200 feet and the fight lasted several minutes. The fish would not fit into his net and measured out at 20 inches with a girth of 8 inches.

We moved further upstream towards to the Wigwam property and switched over to # 18 and #20 CDC Blue-wing Olive dry flies when we noticed an emergence and a few cruising fish starting to feed in the slower water close to the bank. I proceeded to catch and release five heavy body rainbows between 16 and 18 inches.

Larry used a Parachute Olive and caught and released two rainbows of 17 and 18 inches. In the meantime, I moved further upstream to the flats into deeper water and located several feeding fish on the far side bank.

I waded out as far as I could and made a long double haul cast to the porpoising fish using a #20 CDC Olive. The first fish was a large bow which gave a good account of itself before coming to the net. I caught another smaller rainbow and a smaller brown out of the same flat water.

All and all a fantastic day of fishing on the South Platte River!

Final Count: Larry, 10 hookups and 8 to the net. Largest was 20 inches. Joe, 12 hookups and 10 to the net. Largest was 18 inches.



BROOK TROUT PASSAGE AND THE FRED WAARA CHAPTER

By Jeff Gerwitz



ESCANABA—Joint efforts of the Fred Waara Chapter of Trout Unlimited (FWCTU) and Michigan Trout Unlimited (MITU) to restore native brook trout passage in Schwartz Creek, a coldwater tributary of the West Branch Escanaba River, are coming to fruition.

The first of two culvert replacement projects funded with grants from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources, as well as through contributions from MITU, FWCTU, and a number of supportive Trout Unlimited chapters in Michigan, was completed this past September.

Two culverts located under Lake O’Neil Road, a state forest road, that created a long-standing barrier to brook trout passage in 60-Day Creek, a tributary of Schwartz Creek, were removed and replaced with a large, embedded aluminum culvert. The new culvert restores not only the ability of

brook trout to pass both upstream and downstream through the crossing, but also restores 60-Day Creek’s natural capacity to transport of water, sediment, woody debris, and aquatic organisms. This “win” for brook trout in the West Branch Escanaba River watershed is also a win for coldwater habitat conservation in Michigan.

The second culvert replacement project targets a perched and undersized crossing on the main stem of Schwartz Creek. Construction there had also been slated for September 2106, with all necessary permissions, permits, and contracts secured.

Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other plans and sent rain and high water conditions to the U.P. before the replacement project could be started. As a result, this Schwartz Creek Road culvert replacement project is now

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scheduled to occur during summer 2017 when ensuring construction crew safety and minimal disturbance to Schwarz Creek is more feasible.

Unfortunately, as engineering designs for completing the culverts on Schwartz and O'Neil Creeks were being done last summer, they discovered that historic degradation caused by a former dam on Schwarz Creek posed a unique set of challenges to restoring more than twenty miles of brook trout access to upstream spawning, rearing, and thermal refuge habitats.

As a result, and in addition to the roughly \$10,000 the Fred Waara Chapter has already contributed to the engineering side of things, they needed to come up with another \$12,000 to complete the projects.

Michigan TU sent out a request for help, hoping that Michigan chapters would be able to join the other partners in helping to raise as much of the project deficit as they could before September.

After a review by the Vanguard Board, it approved a Vanguard Chapter donation of \$1,000. The Board felt that this was an excellent opportunity to step up and help make a real impact on coldwater conservation in Michigan.



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Vanguard's 2015/2016 Achievements & Financial Report

By Joe Swantek, Treasurer

ROCHESTER HILLS—The Vanguard Chapter Board of Directors budget forecast for the fiscal year ending 9/30/2016 projected a loss of \$1,509. This was done in order to spend more of our invested funds to support additional conservation projects. Here are some of our positive achievements during the past year.

Our 2016 Michigan Fly Fishing Expo fundraiser achieved net income of \$1,043, which included \$567 in pre-sales of our raffle tickets. This was a slight increase over last year's pre-sales of raffle tickets. Total ticket sales were \$1,427, which was the third highest over the past eight years. Our net income of \$1,043 was also the second best result over the past eight years. Our three raffle prizes were donated, which helped to reduce our overall expenses. Our major cost was the \$287 booth rental. We also signed up eight new Vanguard Chapter members for which we will be reimbursed by National Trout Unlimited.

During July 2016, we sponsored one youngster to attend the Michigan Youth Camp.

Three teams from Vanguard (Jeff Gerwitz, Eli Stanesa, Larry Butts, Tom Lasik, Al Wood, Larry and Shari Walla and others) completed another large woody debris survey on Paint Creek from Lake Orion to Gunn Road. Over 60 sites were identified, photographed, and located via map coordinates for CRWC.

In support of the Clinton River Watershed Council, Vanguard members also helped remove a large woody debris site in the spring and a concrete obstruction in the fall on Paint Creek.

Our Chapter members also supported the Upper Black River Association by working on a stream restoration project in August.

Our annual Riverview Lodge Spring Chapter outing on the banks of the Au Sable River achieved record attendance and contributed to our income stream.

The Vanguard Chapter monthly fly tying sessions continued to be very popular and well attended.

The Chapter signed up eleven new members through Trout Unlimited's first year membership initiative.

We gained additional revenue of \$181 through our members meetings 50/50 raffles.

In addition to the above mentioned achievements, we made significant monetary contributions to the following organizations that support our conservation efforts: Michigan TU, Clinton River Watershed Council, D. H. Nature Center, Huron Pines, and DNR Staff House.

Here are some of the financial highlights.

Gross revenue for the fiscal year ending 9/30/2016 was \$5,458 with expenses of \$6,940. This relates to a net loss from all activities of \$1,482.

As of 9/30/16 total assets were \$6,709, with a bank account balance of \$3,947. The remaining assets consisted of equipment and inventory.

As of this writing, our preliminary budget forecast for the fiscal year ending 9/30/17 anticipates revenue of \$6,625 and expenses of \$6,450.

We will continue to support and make contributions to organizations that support our local and statewide conservation efforts. The Board of Directors are in the process of reviewing additional sources of revenue to support our partner organizations.

AS ONE TERM AS CHAPTER PRESIDENT STARTS, ANOTHER ENDS

By Larry Butts

Now that my term as President is completed, it is with a sense of regret that I step down. I have thoroughly enjoyed the role and am pleased with all that we have accomplished.

With the help of Jeff Gerwitz as vice president and an outstanding board of directors, Vanguard's conservation activities in our home waters of Paint Creek and the Black River near Vanderbilt, Michigan, and our work with the State Council, have grown substantially. Our membership has also grown to more than 500 members this year.

Jeff has been an outstanding vice president these past two years and as president will lead us forward to continued success. Jeff has also recruited some new board members in addition to those returning this year that will help to keep the energy flowing.

Meanwhile, I hope to find more time to fish with Elisabeth and her sister Caitlin (my granddaughters), and the regular gang this next season.



IT MAY BE ONLY THE FALL, BUT IT'S TIME TO THINK SPRING EXPO

By Joe Barker

WARREN—March 11 and 12, 2017 may seem like a long way off, but you need to mark the dates on your calendar. Those are the dates of the 2017 Midwest Fly Fishing Expo in Warren, Michigan. The Vanguard Chapter will again be sharing the same booth as last year with Vanguard Fly Tying as part of the Chapter's major fundraising activity of the year.

The Expo will be held at the Macomb Community College Sports and Expo Center at 12 Mile Road and Hayes Road. The Expo features more than 120 exhibitors in over 61,000 square feet of space in the Center, which includes a casting pond where rods from numerous manufacturers can be tested.

The Chapter will feature a raffle, tickets for which will be available for purchase in advance of the Expo. There is no need to be at the Expo to support the Chapter by buying raffle tickets, or to win any of the raffle prizes.

Four items are available for raffle prizes this coming Expo, including a guided trip donated by Al Borger. Larry

Butts has agreed to donate a new kayak, which he won at a recent banquet, and Becca Schlaff has donated a matted picture. However, the most popular item may be a weekend for two at Riverview Lodge and Cabins on the Au Sable River.

Vanguard Fly Tying will be selling custom flies tied by Joe Barker for \$1, along with framed trout, salmon, and steelhead flies ranging in price from \$40 to \$80.

The Expo features all major fly fishing equipment manufacturers, fly casting instruction, and how-to seminars as part of the \$10 admission price. The admission price is waived for a limited number of Vanguard members who volunteer to work at the Vanguard booth selling raffle tickets, signing up new members, and extolling the virtues of Trout Unlimited and the Vanguard Chapter's conservation and fishing activities.

So plan to attend. It's the biggest Chapter get-together of the year.