



2024 Fall/Winter Newsletter



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What is a Trout Unlimited State Council – Burr Tupper, Virginia Council Vice-Chairman

State Councils Chapters in a region are organized into a council. The Virginia council serves as an umbrella organization for its chapters, state-wide. The council officers are made up of volunteers from around the state who may have previously or are currently serving as officers or directors of a local chapter. Council officers are elected by chapter representatives. Councils are the key link between the TU staff and local chapters and play a critical role advocating for trout and salmon at the state level. The successful operation of a TU council is very much dependent on the degree and depth of commitment of the chapters and the council leadership. The council is not simply another chapter and should be regarded as a coalition, the vital thread that binds all the chapters together for mutual support and assistance.

Election of Council Officers

At the annual Virginia TU meeting held September 21, 2024 the following officers were elected.

Burr Tupper-Vice-Chairman

Tom Benzing – National Leadership Council Representative

Amy Orr, Stan Ikonen, Paul Kearney, Jeff Deering – Council Members at Large

Win A Fly Fishing Trip To Alaska!



To enter this sweepstakes, just scan the QR code and follow the instructions. All money raised will be used by the Council to support in-state Priority Waters projects.

Shenandoah National Park Brook Trout Study – Jim Wilson, Virginia TU Council Chairman

In Virginia, Priority Waters focus on having healthy populations of our native eastern Brook Trout—and the streams in the Shenandoah National Park are a key resource for this. Evan Childress—SNP’s Fisheries Biologist—gave a presentation at the Council’s 2023 Annual Meeting on recent observed trends in Park Brook Trout populations. This past summer, a related article was published in the Transactions of the American Fisheries Society. A summary follows:

The NPS evaluated the status and trends of Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) in SNP to understand how these are structured across bedrock geology, elevation, and stream size. They used long-term monitoring data from 94 sites in SNP to evaluate trends in Brook Trout abundance over a 27-year period (1996-2022) and assess the importance of key factors like:

- (1) Bedrock geology—which controls sensitivity to acid deposition,
- (2) Watershed area—related to stream habitat features like complexity and flow variability, and
- (3) Elevation—which creates temperature gradients.

They found significant declines in Brook Trout population over time for 31 of 94 sites, and at least 3 sites had no trout remaining. Estimated Brook Trout abundance declined by 50 percent or more in approximately 70 percent of streams. Sites with the warmest water temperatures exhibited the fastest declines in abundance. However, large watersheds on poorly buffered bedrock exhibited significant gains in abundance with time—suggesting some recovery from acid deposition (sulfates and nitrates).

The map portion of Figure 6 shows (A) predicted Brook Trout trends (shown by the line color) and 2022 abundance (shown by the line width based on fish per 100 meters) for Shenandoah National Park streams. Dark grey areas show watersheds where angling for Brook Trout is allowed inside the Park. The accompanying Figure 6 bar charts show (B) stream distance within each geology type colored by predicted trend, and (C) stream length within each geology type with the width of the bar reflecting the range of abundance shown on the map in order of increasing width.

One of the observations of the SNP finding of large and divergent changes in Brook Trout abundance over recent decades—suggests local water temperature and (pH) acid sensitivity as probable causal mechanisms. In addition, it is important to consider local factors in evaluating long-term trends in stream fish populations. Study results can assist with developing targeted conservation actions within SNP and elsewhere.

Underlying geology varies across SNP with siliciclastic, granitic, and basaltic types each comprising roughly 1/3 of the park area. Streams draining siliciclastic watersheds tend to have very low acid-neutralizing capacity and lower pH, particularly during high flow conditions. Granitic bedrock has intermediate base cation content, and basaltic bedrock contains high levels of base cations, which gives streams in watersheds with these bedrock types higher acid neutralizing capacity and pH.

Understanding variation in Brook Trout populations across SNP can help target conservation efforts

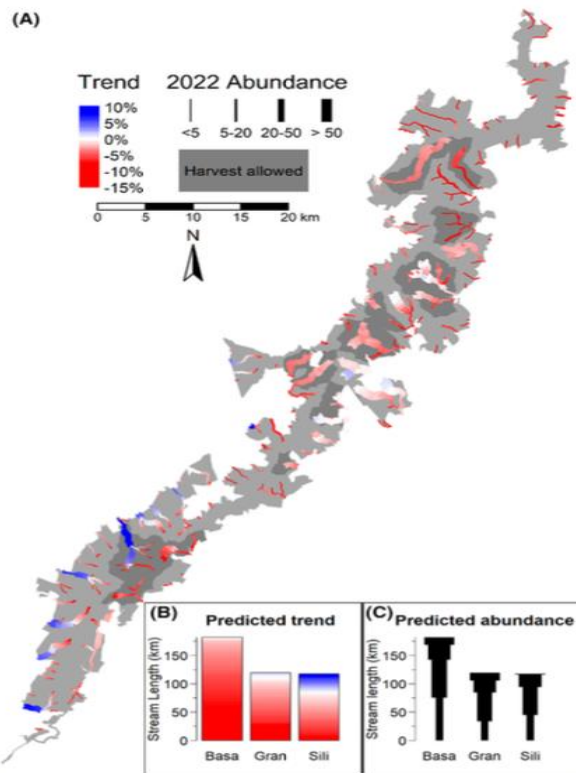


FIGURE 6 (A) Predicted adult Brook Trout trends (line color) and 2022 abundance (line width, fish per 100 m) across streams in Shenandoah National Park. Dark-gray areas show watersheds where recreational harvest of Brook Trout is legal within the park. The bar charts show (B) stream length within each geology type colored by predicted trend and (C) stream length within each geology type with bar width reflecting the abundance categories shown on the map (i.e., <5, 5–20, 20–50, and >50 adults per 100 m in order of increasing width).

to maximize benefits. Although most SNP streams have become less suitable for Brook Trout and exhibited low and declining abundance, populations in relatively large watersheds situated at high elevations and populations in large siliciclastic watersheds appear to have been more resilient over the study period. These populations may benefit from added protection, for example, by targeting forest pest treatments to ensure stable and persistent riparian forest. Positive trends in siliciclastic watersheds suggest that increasing the rate or magnitude of recovery from the effects of acid deposition may further bolster these populations. In addition, populations that have declined precipitously may no longer be robust to the effects of recreational harvest—with a need to revise fishing rules.

For more information about this analysis, consult the full article “Varying Brook Trout Trends” in *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society*, 2024; 153: 250-263.

2024 Council Annual Awards

At the council annual meeting in September the following individuals were recognized for their volunteer contributions.

Youth Education Award - Mike Makufka, Winchester Chapter

Conservationist of the Year - Mike Smith, Winchester Chapter

Certificates of Appreciation

- Freddie Neal – Massanutten Chapter
- Michael Heatwole - Massanutten Chapter
- John Loope – Roanoke Chapter
- Brenda Willis – Roanoke Chapter
- Toni Crouch – Rapidan Chapter
- Noel Muller - Rapidan Chapter
- Carl Jordan – Northern Virginia Chapter

Virginia Council Grant Programs – Burr Tupper, Vice-Chairman

Reminder to all Virginia Chapters the Virginia council has established two grant programs.

1. Conservation Grants
2. Education Grants

More information regarding the grant programs can be found on the council website.

[Opportunities | VA Council of TU](#)

Chapter Programs and Updates

Winchester Chapter's Priority Waters update:- Mike Makufka



Dawn Kirk – US Forest Service biologist

The Priority Waters Committee of the Winchester Chapter has been active with our chosen streams, Little Passage Creek and Mill Run. Since we have decided to be involved with the National Trout Unlimited's Priority Waters Initiative, our committee has been hard at work. We chose these streams as our home waters streams. They are adjacent to the Blue Ridge Mountain area identified as one of three priority waters in the state by TU.

Trout Unlimited and The National Forest Service jointly relocated native Brook Trout into Little Passage Creek in 1995 and Mill Run in 2005. Part of our goal in both of those streams is to ascertain if the native brook trout populations are still present in good numbers. Our committee has entered partnerships with the National Forest Service, Trout

Unlimited, and the Department of Wildlife Service in cooperation with this project.

An agreement with the National Forest Service states:

The Winchester Chapter TU will collect stream and watershed condition information to help identify restoration needs in Mill Run and Little Passage Creek. These could include monitoring

temperature and other water quality parameters, in stream habitat structure (such as large wood), potential sediment sources, and aquatic organism passage, with the goal of maintaining and creating habitat conditions to support native fish species. Following habitat assessment, a project proposal led by the Forest Service will be developed, if warranted. The Winchester TU Chapter will help acquire funding for any projects and provide volunteer labor at the appropriate skill level.

So far, we have had two stream visits, one of them with Dawn Kirk from the Forest Service. Ms. Kirk is the Fisheries Biologist for the Washington and Jefferson National Forest Service. She has recommended and notated on maps, areas and sections of both streams that should be assessed further. In Cooperation with her, we are going to be purchasing data loggers to measure temperature and flow. We will also be measuring PH numbers and possible Dissolve Oxygen. We are determining what stream reaches to focus on and monitoring locations on both streams.

We have historic water quality data from the National Forest Service and DWR. We also have historic large woody debris surveys and fish numbers for both streams. We will be using those GPS location spots to do our monitoring. Our chapter is fortunate to have a GIS mapping person on our committee that has agreed to use the historic data to set up a map with those points and link each point with the data to provide a visual of our project for others to see.

One of the biggest areas of the project is the locations of instream barriers to fish passage, including pipes, bridges, fords, dams, etc. Each of these will be assessed using the protocol of the Southeast Aquatics Resource Partnership (SARP), of which I recently took the training. We will then include the survey results with the SARP national data maps.

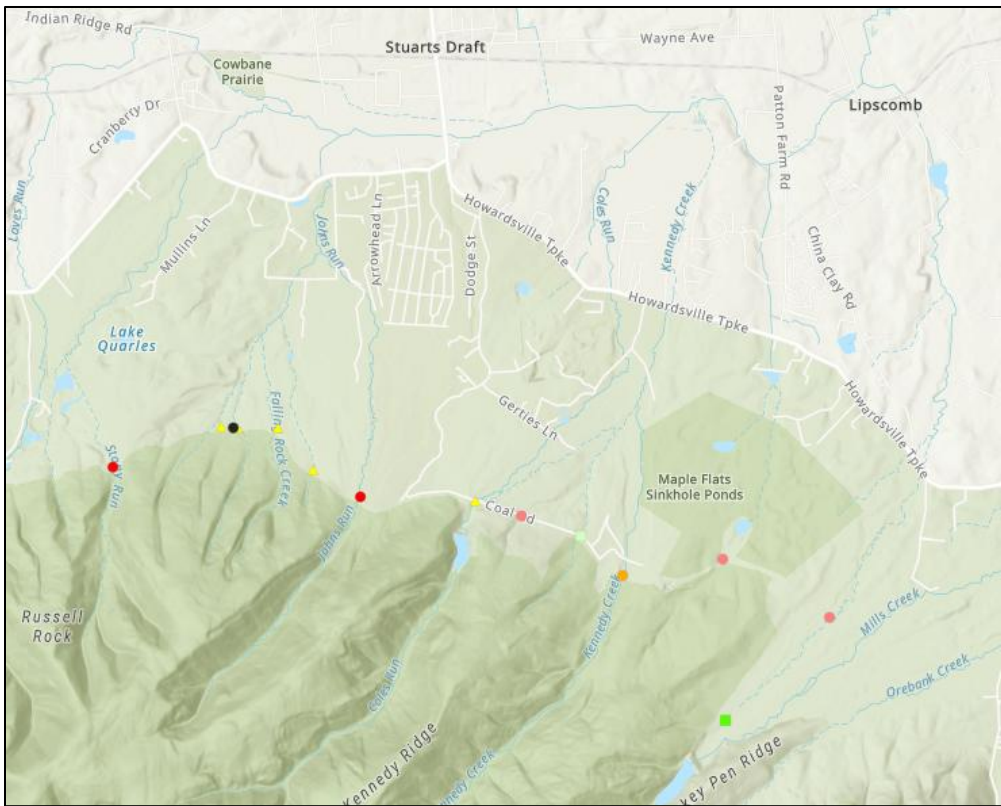
Our committee is currently in the process of identifying and contacting local partners, including local colleges, municipalities, and like-minded conservation organizations. I am excited to see where this projects takes our chapter and what the results will show.

Shenandoah Valley Chapter report on activities in Priority Waters - Tom Benzing

The Shenandoah Valley Chapter completed 15 surveys of road-stream crossings in the upper South River watershed (see map below) within the Blue Ridge Priority Waters Area. These surveys were submitted to a data manager who rates crossings in their severity as barriers to movement for trout and other aquatic organisms. Our chapter hopes to partner with the US Forest Service to replace severe and significant barriers that currently prevent or inhibit native brook trout movement.



Little Passage Creek



Rapidan Chapter TIC Update

Trout in the Pre-School Classroom



The Rapidan Chapter is proud to be a Trout in the Classroom (TIC) supporter of Gró Preschool in Prince William County. There are around 200 schools in Virginia that participate in the TIC program, and Gró is one of the few preschools to do so. They receive Brook Trout eggs in the Fall, take care of raising the fry and release them in the Spring in a nearby private property with an appropriate environment for Brook Trout to survive. The kids are excited to have the trout, and fully participate in the program. Below is a recent photo of their tank of healthy fry.

For more information about the Virginia TIC program or to get involved, contact Chuck at choysa1@comcast.net.

Amy Orr.

Virginia Trout in the Classroom Mike Makufka, Virginia TU TIC Coordinator

The 2024/2025 Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program in Virginia is in full swing. The eggs have been distributed and classrooms should soon see the eggs hatching. The alevin stage should become apparent. The alevin stage is when the egg has just hatched and the egg sac is still visible.

This year there are 217 TIC programs statewide. Schools from chapters that are not very active still have someone who is running the program in their area. We even have 4 schools in the Virginia

Beach area of the state. There is not a chapter presence or readily available trout streams in the area but there are still schools participating. Every area of the state has schools participating. The chapter with the most schools in the TIC program is the Northern Virginia Chapter with 41 schools enrolled. That is an amazing number.

Throughout the school year, I have many schools inquiring about how to begin a TIC program. Some of those inquiries are just looking for information but many of them are very interested in the program. I must again credit the chapter coordinators with contacting these teachers and helping incorporate the schools into the program.

The TIC program is a big part of chapters statewide. What the program needs is more dedicated chapter volunteers that can help the coordinators which in turn helps the teachers and ultimately the students. Volunteers can fill many roles within the TIC program. Simple tasks such as delivering eggs in the fall, helping with programs on release days, or helping teachers troubleshoot issues that may arise throughout the year are among some of the things chapter volunteers can do.

Trout in the Classroom Grant:

The Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited is happy to announce that TC Energy has awarded a \$15,000 grant to the Trout in the Classroom Program to help with some of the expenses incurred by schools enrolled in TIC. The money from the grant is to help chapters' schools **replace** broken or worn-out equipment and to help defray some of the costs of transportation so students can release their fish in the Spring. The money cannot fund equipment purchases for new schools entering the program.

Any school enrolled in the TIC program is eligible to apply for funding. All applications must be made through the sponsoring chapter. No schools can apply on their own. If the schools are in an area where chapter presence is either limited or non-existent the TIC coordinator can apply on behalf of the schools.

What can be funded:

1. Equipment replacement: tanks, filters, chillers, hoses, air pumps, chemicals, and test kits.
2. Partial funding is available (up to ½ the cost of busing for field trips).

What will not be funded:

1. Any type of salaries or reimbursement for hours.
2. Any equipment for new schools entering the program.

For more information and to obtain an application for funding please email:

Mike Makufka at: mmakufkatic@gmail.com

National Leadership Council (NLC)

Eric Tichay, Virginia Council TU, NLC Representative

Trout Unlimited recently held two annual organizational business meetings in October—the National Leadership Council and the Trout Unlimited annual meeting.

National Leadership Council

The NLC held a business meeting on October 16. Presentations were made on two topics.

- TU National Conservation Agenda (NCA): Process Oriented Approach by Andrew Keneflick
- NLC Climate Change Workgroup – “Climate Change Coordinator Training Modules” Updates by Jeff Holzem

National Conservation Agenda: Under the Trout Unlimited By-Laws, the NLC is responsible for developing and amending the NCA and directing its implementation in projects throughout all levels of TU, including the NLC itself, TU staff, state councils, local chapters, and individual members.

The NCA was last approved on September 30, 2016. It was comprised of four agenda items; Protect, Reconnect, Restore and Sustain. It is accomplished through the means and strategic opportunities outlined in our TU National Strategic Plan. However, the current TU Strategic Plan is dated 2021-2026. Everyone, in TU leadership recognized that the 2016 NCA version was outdated, needed revising, and did not reflect how TU currently sets its conservation priorities. The NLC agreed to work on adopting a process-oriented approach to develop an updated NCA which would begin with input from grassroots Chapters and Councils.

NLC Climate Change Workgroup: The Workgroup gave the NLC members a presentation that encouraged Councils and Chapters to train and appoint Climate Change Coordinators.

The Workgroup welcomes TU members and supporters who want to protect trout and salmon and their habitats from the effects of climate change. They are looking for more volunteers to help achieve climate change goals. There are two ways to get involved.

First, volunteers can join the Climate Change Workgroup for conversations on the fourth Thursday of each month at 8 pm ET.

Second, please consider volunteering as a Trout Unlimited Climate Change Coordinator for your council or chapter and help foster climate awareness among TU members and in our communities, include climate mitigation features in conservation projects, and advocate for emissions reductions. Training opportunities will be announced.

TU Annual Meeting

The TU Annual Meeting was held on October 16 shortly after the NLC annual meeting. Rich Thomas gave meeting attendees the “State of the Grassroots” Presentation. The report shows volunteer hours had an 11% growth over last year and hours are slowly growing to match pre-COVID records.

In addition,, the NLC will have a renewed focus on our member and supporter base. Rich encouraged “gearing up for the future” by expanding membership engagement opportunities at the Council and Chapter levels.

- Encourage chapters to adopt weekend meetings (>= 2 annually)
- Understand “why” I came to TU may be multifaceted
- Continue to provide that “welcome” experience
- Allow your “board” to become younger
- “MORE EVENTS THAN MEETINGS”

Shenandoah and Upper James River Watershed Home Rivers Initiatives Updates- Seth Coffman -Chesapeake Bay Project Manager TU

As we prepare to turn the page on 2024 and head into 2025 full steam with our conservation and restoration work in Virginia, I wanted to provide a brief update on some key accomplishments over the past 12 months and what lies ahead for TU’s restoration work.

In 2024 TU staff working in Virginia had 2 main focal areas of work:

1. Continue our strong partnership with the US Forest Service on restoration and reconnection projects in VA
2. Expand and strengthen our private lands work in the Upper James River watershed and Shenandoah River watershed.

Our partnership with the Forest Service has been bolstered by TU's Keystone Agreement signed in 2022 that ramped up TU's role in reconnecting and restoring waterways and habitat on public lands. At the end of 2023 TU completed an AOP project on Railroad Hollow where we have seen the 45 brook trout previously trapped in the outlet pool of the impassable culvert now able to access upstream habitat through the new bottomless arch (see attached before and after photos). TU's stream restoration specialists Dylan Cooper and Ben Bradley are currently working on the assessment and design for 5 additional AOP projects (Rocky Run, Furnace Branch, Piney Branch, Spruce Lick Run and Little Dry River) on Forest Service lands. With the first of those slated for construction in 2025.

On the private lands side, TU is leveraging state and federal funding for agricultural best management practices to restore high priority coldwater streams in the state. Virginia's Ag Cost Share Program has seen record funding the last few years and TU is currently in its second year of implementing an NRCS RCPP agreement. TU has assisted dozens of landowners in the Upper James River watershed with Ag Cost Share projects that have excluded livestock from brook trout streams and created new riparian buffer.

On the very headwaters of the Jackson River, TU's Sammy Vest has spent the last 3 years working with landowners, our TU conservation staff, and contractors to:

Install 20 miles of exclusion and cross fencing

Install 6 miles of water lines and 41 troughs for alternative livestock watering systems

Establish 100 acres of riparian buffer

Restore 8.5 miles of stream instream habitat enhancement or riparian buffers

Permanently protect 680 acres of the Jackson River headwaters by a conservation easement

The RCPP agreement provides close to \$2 million in federal financial assistance to farmers in TU priority watersheds to implement stream and riparian corridor restoration. Over the course of 2 signups, TU has assisted landowners with applications for the program and have allocated over \$1.5 million towards coldwater stream restoration and AOP projects in the Upper James River watershed in Highland Co, the Upper South Branch Potomac River watershed in Highland County, and the Shenandoah River watershed in Rockingham County. TU will begin implementing some of these projects in 2025. With some of the first work to occur on brook trout tributaries to the South Branch Potomac River in Highland County and the Upper Jackson River. All the contracted RCPP projects will be completed by 2027.

TU also secured several grants in 2024 that will allow us to continue and expand our work in Virginia. Two grants totally almost \$2 million dollars from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will broadly support our work over the next 3 years with specific targets for additional instream habitat work on Mossy Creek, coldwater streams in the Upper Jackson and Upper Cowpasture River watersheds and important coldwater tributaries to the South Fork Shenandoah River in Page County.

Downstream/Outlet



Volunteer Positions

The Council is looking for volunteers in the following areas.

- Treasurer
- Virginia TU Council Representative to Department of Wildlife Resources
- Communications Chairperson

For more information regarding these positions please visit the Council website.

[Opportunities | VA Council of TU](#)

Council 2025 Business Calendar

COUNCIL EVENTS (3/year)	DESCRIPTION (Council Officers and Chapter Delegates)	DATE
Council Meeting	Host: Winchester Chapter Shenandoah Lodge & Sports Athletic Club 180 Bald Eagle Drive Lake Frederick, VA 22630 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Sat. 2/22/25
Council Meeting	<i>In conjunction with the VA Priority Waters Forum</i>	Sat. 5/31/25

	Hungry Mother State Park Marion, VA 24354 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	
Council Meeting	Annual Meeting Graves Mountain Lodge, Syria 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Sat. 9/20/25
EXCOMM EVENTS	DESCRIPTION (<i>Executive Committee – Business</i>)	DATE
ExComm	Zoom	Mon. 1/6/25
ExComm	Zoom	Mon. 3/17/25
ExComm	Zoom	Mon. 6/16/25
ExComm	Zoom	Mon. 8/18/25
ExComm	Zoom - Follow up on VCTU Annual Meeting action items	Mon. 10/20/25
COUNCIL SUPPORTED EVENTS	DESCRIPTION (Council Participation)	DATE
Virginia Fly Fishing & Wine Festival	Meadows Events Park, Doswell, VA	Jan 10-11/25
Virginia Priority Waters Forum	Hungry Mother State Park, Marion, VA	May 30-31/25
VIRGINIA EVENTS OF INTEREST	DESCRIPTION (Annual Chapter/Angling/Sporting Events)	DATE
Link to Events List	Event list located on the Council Website	
TU NATIONAL EVENTS	DESCRIPTION	DATE
TU Pacific Regional Rendezvous	Pleasanton, CA	Feb 28-Mar 2/25
TU Rockies Regional Rendezvous	Sandy, UT	Mar 28-29/25
TU Eastern Regional Rendezvous	Shepherdstown, WV	Apr 25-27/25
TU Annual Meeting CX3	Minneapolis-St Paul, MN	Sep 24-28/25
*IMPORTANT TU DATES	DESCRIPTION	DATE
Annual Fiscal Year	April 01, 2025 – March 31, 2026	
Chapter Report	Annual Financial Report – 45 days after the FY	Thu. 5/15/26

Required number and type of Council meetings as described in the Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited Bylaws.

Article II Council Meetings

Section 2: Meeting Schedule: (3 meetings) (attendees – elected officers and appointees, and Chapter delegates – 2 delegates/Chapter)

- A. The Annual Council meeting shall be held in the month of August or September....
- B. Two additional Council meetings shall be held each year and additional regular meetings....

Article IV Committees

Section 1: Executive Committee: (4 meetings) (attendees – elected officers of the Council and all committee chairs)

Section 1. ...The Executive Committee shall meet or conduct conference calls a minimum of 4 times a year....