



## President's Letter

A former business colleague of mine used to say, "This is not Disneyland, every ride is not fun." Covid-19 has certainly taken us for an unenjoyable ride. However, today I would like to focus on the positives. This edition of "The Flyer" includes articles on good things happening at OBTU:

1. Chapter meetings: Stay in touch with OBTU via Zoom.
2. OBTU Vies for TU National "Adopt-a-Stream" Grant
3. OBTU Conservation: Initiatives in 4 States
4. OBTU Driftless Area Fishing Outings: Fall 2020
5. OBTU Endowment Fund & Appointment of New Trustees
6. Increasing Diversity: A TU Strategic Priority

Even though we have been forced to "moth ball" many of our in-person activities, rest assured that OBTU remains strong through our troubled times. The OBTU Board of Directors remains motivated. Our conservation work continues. The balance sheet is strong. All of our programs will resume once Covid-19 subsides. In the meantime, we will conduct our business via Zoom and indulge in a few socially distanced outdoor activities. In the immortal words of General Douglas MacArthur, "we shall return".

Keep your lines tight.

Willie Beshire

## 1. Chapter Meetings: Stay in Touch With OBTU via Zoom

Due to the Covid-19 risk, the OBTU Board has concluded that we should not risk holding our traditional in door, large group chapter meetings until the virus subsides. For the next several months we plan to hold online chapter meetings via Zoom. Mark your calendars for the following Zoom events scheduled to take place at our normal meeting times (7:00pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month):

**Sept 16 “Northeast Iowa Night”.** The topic is conservation and fishing in the Iowa Driftless Area. Brian Fankhauser, of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation; Kent Kleckner, Proprietor of Decorah-based Bear Creek Anglers, and Mike Siepker, Iowa DNR Biologist will talk. Hear about OBTU’s contribution to Bloody Run Creek and more. Consider joining the October 16-18 OBTU fishing outing to NE Iowa.



Kent Kleckner of Bear Creek Anglers

Link to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation:

<https://www.inhf.org/>

Link to Bear Creek Anglers:

<http://www.bearcreekanglers.com/>

Link to Iowa DNR Trout Fishing:

<https://www.iowadnr.gov/fishing/trout-fishing>

**Oct 21 “OBTU & the Wisconsin Driftless”.** OBTU has much going on in the Wisconsin Driftless. We are finalizing guest speakers from the Driftless who will discuss current conservation events and fishing. OBTU projects will be highlighted.

**Nov 18 “Adventures in Southwest Colorado”.** Tim Patterson, owner of the Ridgway Independent Guide Service (RIGS), will lead a program on fly fishing opportunities and conservation in SW Colorado. In early September, RIGGS is leading a group of 6 OBTU members on “The Best Fly Fishing Adventure in Colorado”. Be prepared to hear some interesting testimonials & tall fish tales! Link to RIGS: <https://fishrigs.com/>



RIGS Adventure in the Gunnison Gorge

**Watch for Zoom Invitations & online access details in OBTU email announcements. Also, Zoom details will be posted on the [obtu.org](http://obtu.org) calendar as the specifics become available.**

## 2. OBTU Vies for TU National “Embrace a Stream” Grant:

The Trout Unlimited National Organization annually disperses about 20 monetary grants among the approximately 350 Trout Unlimited Chapters through its “Embrace a Stream” program. This year the Oak Brook Chapter of Trout Unlimited, OBTU, submitted an Embrace a Stream Grant application to support the Conway Creek Restoration project.

The Conway Creek Restoration project will transform approximately one half mile of Conway Creek into excellent trout habitat near its juncture with Tainter Creek in Soldiers Grove, WI. Oak Brook Trout Unlimited is working with a bevy of partners including the Coulee Chapter, the Blackhawk Chapter, the Tainter Creek Watershed Farmer Led Council and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. And, the Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TUDARE) is leading the group by designing and managing the project.



Section of Conway Creek to be rehabilitated (near its juncture with Tainter Creek)



The grant we seek will be added to contributions from OBTU, other chapters, and the US Department of Agriculture so the project is fully funded. OBTU member donations made it possible for OBTU to apply for the matching grant, so thank you. The highly competitive and extensive Embrace a Stream grant process notifies grantees November 1st. Keep your fingers crossed.

This represents an exceptional opportunity for OBTU to make a major impact on a stream restoration project in the heart of the Wisconsin Driftless Area. OBTU expresses special thanks to Jim Dickens, OBTU Fund Raising Chair, for his proactive promotional efforts as well as leading the creation of an outstanding grant application. OBTU also recognizes Dave Carlson, Conservation Committee Chair, who has worked tirelessly over the past several years building relationships with TUDARE leadership and positioning OBTU for this opportunity. While handshakes are out of favor in the Covid era, please feel free to give these guys a very vigorous slap on the backside when you see them!

### 3. OBTU 2020 Conservation: Initiatives in 4 States

Oak Brook TU's 2020 conservation activities include volunteer and financial support for projects in support of Trout Unlimited's mission of conserving, protecting and restoring coldwater fisheries and their watersheds in the Midwest.

As COVID-19 escalated, we had to cancel volunteer in-person activities such as the May Coldwater Macroinvertebrate Survey and the spring DuPage River Cleanup Day. We will continue to monitor COVID-19 developments closely before deciding what to do with fall in-person events.

I am happy to report that most of the conservation projects we support continue to move forward! Our conservation financial commitments this year include support for rivers and streams in Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa and potentially Illinois.

#### 2020 Conservation Project Highlights

**Our Wisconsin focus** this year includes conservation financial commitments for the Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TUDARE), a Kickapoo River watershed stream restoration, and continued stream improvement work in Monroe County.

The Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TUDARE) is a long-term initiative to protect, restore and enhance cold water rivers in the Driftless Area of southeast Minnesota, southwest Wisconsin, northeast Iowa, and northwest Illinois. TUDARE has helped raise \$65 million for stream restoration projects with over 500 miles of public fishing access added. TUDARE relies greatly on the work and passion of TU volunteers. OBTU's support includes money donated to directly support TUDARE general operations.

TUDARE plays a key role in selecting, designing, planning, writing grants, and coordinating funding for stream restoration projects in the Driftless Area. Several creeks in the Kickapoo River watershed were scheduled for improvement work in 2020, including Citron Creek, Warner Creek, and Conway Creek. Work has been completed on Citron Creek in Crawford County and is currently underway on Warner Creek, which is located up near the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. OBTU has pledged our support for Conway Creek, which is a feeder stream of Tainter Creek (which flows into the Kickapoo River). OBTU Fundraising Chair Jim Dickens partnered with local Wisconsin TU chapters to submit a joint TU Embrace A Stream grant application. Based on the timing of the grant process and other projects underway, field work on Conway Creek is expected to begin in 2021.



Since 2014, OBTU has provided both volunteer and financial support to conservation projects that encompass work to reduce soil erosion and phosphorus discharge in Monroe County, Wisconsin, mainly within the city of Sparta. This year, OBTU has pledged support for maintenance of Monroe County fishing easements utilizing mechanical equipment. A planned tour of Sparta area stream restoration projects supported by OBTU in recent years has been postponed until next year due to Covid-19 concerns.

## . OBTU 2020 Conservation: Initiatives in 4 States -continued

**Conservation activities in Michigan** are focused on the Coldwater River watershed near Grand Rapids and the Dowagiac River near Niles, along with a special onetime opportunity on the Au Sable River. First, we are continuing our cooperative efforts with the Coldwater River Watershed Council (CRWC) that began 15 years ago. Two macroinvertebrate survey workdays were planned where members would collect stream samples from designated sites, then count and classify the aquatic insects and various macroinvertebrates found. By classifying and trending the population data, the CRWC gains a better understanding of how stream health is evolving. For the safety of our volunteers, the May Macroinvertebrate Survey was cancelled. However, we are hoping a small group will be able to go ahead with the Fall survey planned for Saturday, October 10th. OBTU is represented on the Coldwater River Watershed Council by Marvin Strauch.



Last year, we expanded data collected at the Coldwater survey sites to include water temperature monitoring. This year, we further expanded our Coldwater monitoring efforts by funding a Mayfly Sensor Station to provide online real time water quality information. The Mayfly Sensor Station is a solar powered, low-cost, easy-to-use water monitoring station designed to collect continuous temperature, depth, conductivity, and turbidity data. Data are then uploaded to an online database via cellular signal for real-time access to current stream conditions. This unit is part of a national TU initiative for do-it-yourself water monitoring.

More information on the TU Mayfly DIY Water Quality Monitoring program can be found at the following link: <https://www.tu.org/science/science-engagement/community-science/mayfly/>

"Our" Mayfly Monitoring Unit on the Coldwater is up and running! Check out the following link to the real time data:

<http://monitormywatershed.org/sites/ColdwaterM43/>

The Dowagiac River is one of the closest rivers to our chapter with potential for a high-quality coldwater fishery. Removal of the Pucker Street Dam in Niles, Michigan continues on track this summer. Restoration efforts stabilizing the river channel where needed and planting banks/riparian areas have already begun and are expected to continue through 2021. Removing the dam will open up the entire river system to upstream migrations of steelhead, salmon, and other fish species. It will also expand opportunities for volunteers to help with watershed planning and habitat monitoring. Conservation efforts on the Dowagiac River are driven by MEANDRS (Meeting Ecological and Agricultural Needs within the Dowagiac River System), of which OBTU is a Board member.



Additionally, for 2020, OBTU has joined with the Michigan Trout Unlimited Property Management Committee and a number of partners to support the replacement of a long stairway which provides access to the Au Sable River. The hope is that construction will occur by the end of the year. OBTU has a long history with the Illinois Youth Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp which is held on the Au Sable at the nearby RAM Center.

**This year, OBTU is helping the Iowa Department of Natural Resources** to acquire land parcel additions adjacent to Wildlife Management Areas that will provide additional habitat/stream resources as well as provide expanded public fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing access. Through a new relationship with The Iowa Natural

### 3. OBTU 2020 Conservation: Initiatives in 4 States -continued

Heritage Foundation (INHF), we joined with over a dozen other conservation organizations/individuals to raise the private partner funds required to leverage grants to help acquire two properties and ensure their transfer to the Iowa DNR.



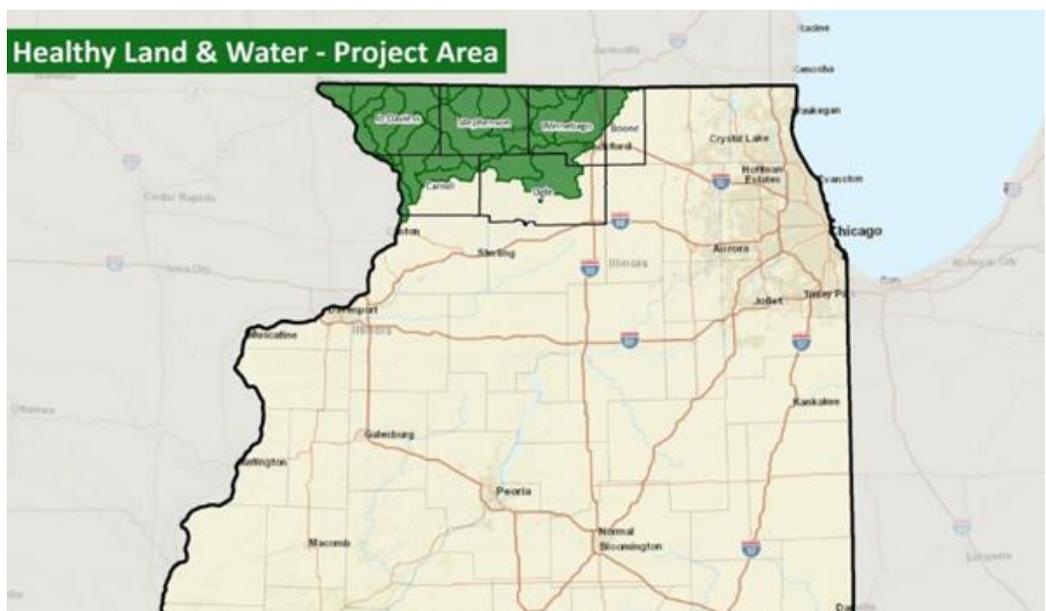
The first property, a 165-acre parcel on Bloody Run Creek, was transferred to the Iowa DNR in June. This parcel is located adjacent to the west end of the Wildlife Management Area and provides improved access to the special fishing regulations section (14 inch minimum size limit and artificial lure only on brown trout). Bloody Run is probably the easiest Iowa trout stream to get to for Illinois anglers. The stream is directly across the Mississippi from Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. It is stocked year-round with catchable-size rainbows and also contains wild browns.

The second property is a 32-acre addition to Falcon Springs Wildlife Management Area that

will provide additional habitat/stream resources as well as public access to Ten Mile Creek, an area currently closed to the public. The Iowa DNR has sampled the fishery on this property and found naturally reproducing brown trout with adults up to 15 inches. The project remains on track, with pledge payments expected to be due by November 1st. We look forward to additional stream protection opportunities and partnerships with the INHF in the future!

#### **The Conservation Committee continues to pursue opportunities 'closer to home' in Illinois.**

One intriguing project OBTU is participating in is called Healthy Land & Water: A Plan for Northwest IL. Healthy Land & Water brings people from different sectors together to create large areas of climate-resilient land where environmental conservation is practiced. We have connected with the consulting company working on the watershed plan for one of the pilot streams in the hopes of finding a local landowner interested in



### 3. OBTU 2020 Conservation: Initiatives in 4 States -continued

an improvement project. Funding for conservation projects for the period of 2019-2023 is available through a large grant TUDARE and its partners were awarded by the USDA'S Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which includes part of northwest Illinois.

<https://www.healthylandandwater.org/>

We began participating in the DuPage County Adopt-A-Stream program in 2019, with two cleanup days held on the West Branch of the DuPage River near downtown Naperville, IL. Two cleanup days had been planned for this year, but unfortunately the spring cleanup day was cancelled due to COVID-19. The current plan is for a small group of volunteers to work along our adopted section of the West Branch on Saturday, October 24th. Participants will be required to wear masks and practice social distancing as they clean up trash and debris.



#### Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed to make these 2020 commitments happen. The Conservation Committee is looking for members who are interested in leading or supporting an event. If you'd like to be on the Conservation Committee or are interested in additional information on conservation, email Dave Carlson at [dmcarslon@hotmail.com](mailto:dmcarslon@hotmail.com).

The financial support of conservation efforts is made possible by the fundraising efforts of the chapter. Please watch for information on additional 2020 fundraising activities and thank you for your generous support in prior years.

## 4. OBTU “Driftless Area” Fishing Outings---Fall 2020

Two OBTU fishing outings are being held this fall. Contact Willie Beshire for details: [wbeshire@aol.com](mailto:wbeshire@aol.com)

### Sept 11-13: Wisconsin Driftless Area (near Viroqua)

Thirteen OBTU members are signed up & raring to go. Based on our great experience from last year, we are returning to the Nature Nooks Retreat as our base and also have a few people camping at the nearby West Fork Sportsman’s Club. Nature Nooks is a beautiful property with 1 mile of private access on the West Fork of the Kickapoo River. Link to Nature Nooks: <https://www.naturenooksretreat.com/>

Social Distancing will be the order of the day with most attendees driving alone, lodging in single rooms or camping, cooking/dining outdoors, and maintaining a rod length of distance on the streams. Nature Nooks has implemented extensive cleaning/sanitation of the lodging. They have also incorporated a one day buffer between guest changes to allow thorough ventilation of the units.

Numerous blue ribbon trout streams are nearby.



Nature Nooks Retreat Property  
(One of our Cabins in Distance)

### Oct 16-18: Iowa Driftless Area (near Decorah)

Ten OBTU members have currently registered interest in the Iowa trip. You are welcome to join us. Everyone will book their own individual, socially distanced lodging in Decorah Iowa. We will loosely coordinate fishing plans so that small teams of about 2 or 3 will be deployed in various high quality stream access points. If you like, we’ll meet you at the stream. The trip will be friendly to beginners and seasoned fisherman alike. If desired, we will pair you up with others who know the area & can help put you on some fish! Kent Kleckner, proprietor of Bear Creek Anglers, has volunteered to support our group & help with local knowledge, fly selection, dining options, etc. You can explore a number of high quality streams including the North Bear, South Bear, Waterloo, Trout Run, Coldwater, Patterson and French Creek. You may choose to stop at Bloody Run or the Paint on your drive to or from Chicago.

Fishing in NE Iowa is typically outstanding. Naturally reproducing Browns are abundant. Iowa performs extensive stocking of Rainbow’s which are usually not too hard to find. Iowa’s trout fishing season extends throughout the full year---the season is closed by mid-October for most surrounding areas.



A nice NE Iowa Brown  
(Courtesy Bear Creek Anglers)

## 5. OBTU Endowment Fund & Appointment of New Trustees

Over the years, OBTU has developed and invested in an Endowment Fund. The purpose of this fund is to build a more secure, vibrant future for the Chapter's conservation and education activities by putting some assets in an investment account now, that will pay for compelling future projects with cost that cannot be covered by current income. This can also be an account that also serves as a "rainy day" fund for such endeavors in times of need. The OBTU vision is to grow its Endowment Fund to a level where it generates \$5,000 of annual investment income for perpetuity which can be used for these purposes.

Bit by bit, donation by generous donation, this fund continues building to the point where it can spin off serious additions to what OBTU can accomplish with current income.

An endowment fund is an investment fund established by a foundation or organization that makes consistent withdrawals from invested capital. The capital in endowment funds, often used by universities, nonprofit organizations, churches and hospitals, is generally utilized for specific needs. Endowment funds are typically funded entirely by donations that are deductible for the donors.

Prior to this year, there have been three Trustees that have provided oversight of the Oak Brook Endowment Fund. Earlier this year, the Trustees passed a resolution to expand to a total of 5 trustees. The OBTU Leadership Development Committee then recommended 3 new Endowment Fund Trustees which were approved by the OBTU Board of Directors in July. We are pleased to report that Tom Wilhelm, Dave Lunardini, and Bob Hutchinson accepted appointments as new trustees of the Endowment Fund. They join Trustees Ed Michael, and Larry Varsek in forming a committee of 5 Trustees who are currently overseeing the Fund. OBTU Chapter Treasurer, Jack Potts, will continue to serve as an ex officio, but non-voting trustee.

The late Fred Hodge had served as Endowment Committee Chairman for many years. We would like to recognize Fred's significant contributions and extraordinary commitment to growing this fund to help secure OBTU's long term financial security and enhanced ability to fulfill its mission. Fred just recently passed away on August 28, 2020. Fred was an inspiration to all who knew him and will be missed by many. We will further memorialize Fred in future chapter news.



The late Fred Hodge accepts an OBTU Lifetime Service Award at the 2019 Holiday Party.

If you are looking for a good cause to include in your estate planning, please consider the OBTU Endowment Fund. For more information, contact any of the Endowment Fund Trustees.

## 6. Improving Diversity, a Strategic TU Priority

There's no getting around it. Trout Unlimited including our OBTU Chapter are diversity challenged. The TU National organization started a diversity initiative in 2011. At the local level, OBTU has made a number of efforts to improve our member diversity by recruiting more women, more youth, more minorities, etc. However, these efforts have not achieved the desired level of success.

TU National is currently embarking on the development of a new strategic plan. Improving diversity has been identified as one of TU's strategic priorities. Chris Wood, Chief Executive of TU, has noted that "people of color represent 20 percent of the fly-fishing community nationally, but only three percent are TU members. Women represent more than 30 percent of the fly-fishing demographic nationally, but only six percent are TU members" He further remarked that TU not only does not reflect the demographics of America, we don't even reflect the fly-fishing community. Until we do, we will be less effective in growing our membership and furthering our mission of conserving, protecting and restoring North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds."

In 2016, the National Leadership established the Diversity and Inclusion workgroup and developed the following mission: "To create effective strategies and programs to recruit a more diverse membership profile in TU; encourage diversity within leadership at the chapter, state and national levels; and to ensure every chapter creates a welcoming environment for TU members of different genders, ethnicities, ages, and cultures to achieve the TU conservation mission." Everyone has a role to play. We request that all of our members ask themselves, how can I best contribute to a welcoming environment at TU? What can I do to help recruit a more diverse OBTU membership? Who can I invite to come along with me to a chapter event (perhaps a Zoom session during the Covid era)?

As TU National recommends, we are reaching out to our membership to invite anyone interested to serve on a Diversity Committee. For the time being, we will conduct any meetings via Zoom which will allow for diverse participation of people who are distant from our Oak Brook stomping grounds. We especially encourage new members or anyone who believes they have a unique insight into the discussion of diversity and inclusion. The first virtual meeting will be scheduled for first or second week of October, and will be a brainstorming session.



If you are interested in participating on the Diversity Committee, please contact Carol Hennessy at [clhennessy84@gmail.com](mailto:clhennessy84@gmail.com). Carol has served as an OBTU Officer and on the Board of Directors for many years.