



CONSERVATION & EDUCATION 2024/2025 PROGRAMS



CONSERVATION PROJECTS

OBTU conservation projects range across the waters we fish in Illinois, Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin. A significant portion of OBTU dollars and volunteering restore, conserve, test and research. OBTU maintains long-term partnering relationships in all four states which provides ongoing opportunities to put the chapter's conservation efforts and dollars to good use. OBTU's longest standing relationship of more than 20 years is with TUDARE (TU Driftless Area Restoration Effort) where we continue to participate in multiple states. In 2024, OBTU procured EDNA testing equipment to capture DNA from water samples. As an example of our close working relationship with TUDARE, OBTU recently led a demonstration of our EDNA testing capability for Sara Stassman, TUDARE Program Manager, and several other TU leaders on Harrison Creek in Wisconsin. Selected other partnering relationships are highlighted within each state listed below.

Here is a quick overview of what's happening on our local waters:



ILLINOIS

We are partnered with the Conservation Foundation to conduct clean up on the Dupage River in Naperville. And, out near Galena we are or will test and monitor various creeks. We will test for trout DNA and monitor stream temperature and oxygen content for suitable habitat.

IOWA

OBTU partnered with the Iowa DNR and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to provide conservation easements on Otter Creek. We also provided funds to help restore a section of North Bear Creek in 2024 and future phases are planned. OBTU will conduct brook trout DNA testing on our fishing outings to assess Iowa brook trout populations.

MICHIGAN

OBTU will continue involvement with MEANDERS and other environmental groups in the multimillion-dollar effort to restore the Dowagiac River following the Pucker Street Dam removal. This year OBTU will provide and support two new may fly monitors. OBTU will also do some DNA testing in partnership with the Michigan DNR. In addition, we continue our work with the Coldwater River Watershed Council and the TU Schrems Chapter to conduct entomology surveys to help monitor trends in stream quality as well as other ongoing projects.



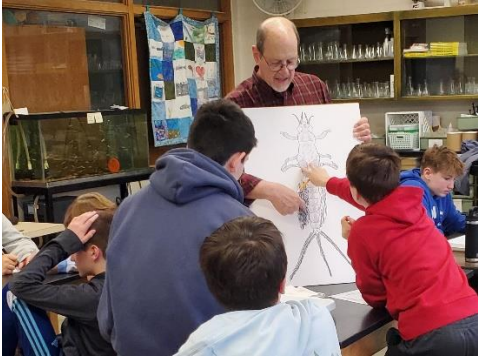
WISCONSIN

OBTU will continue its partnership with the TU Clearwater chapter to restore a section of Traverse Creek, home to brook trout. The restoration will include sediment removal, riparian planting and brook trout habitat creation. Across southern Wisconsin, OBTU will assist with a University of Wisconsin Stevens Point research project by conducting DNA testing for brook trout, an endemic species in the Driftless area. OBTU is also continuing to work with the SEWTU Chapter on improving cold-water trout streams within a day-trip of Chicago.

OBTU remains very active and expects to uncover and begin more conservation projects throughout the year.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Over the last 50 years, OBTU has built community support for Trout Unlimited's mission across thousands of people. OBTU focuses on the future with many youth programs in addition to our adult outreach.



TROUT IN THE CLASS ROOM

OBTU introduced TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM in 2008. We now coordinate 18 of the 30 Illinois programs interacting with 100's of students from 1st through 12th grade. TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM is a cooperative program between Trout Unlimited, the Illinois DNR and local schools that allows teachers and their students to learn about the natural world by raising trout from egg to fingerling and then releasing their fish into the wild. OBTU provides funding to new schools, as well as guidance in maintaining the aquaria and enhancing the program.



YOUTH FLY FISHING

The Chapter's Youth Fly Fishing Program is now in its 20th year! We offer one-day classes to boys and girls 11 to 18 years. OBTU supplies all equipment, fly tying materials, and provides the instruction free of charge. This program has now introduced over 1000 young people to the sport of fly fishing. We hope this program also alerts young people to TROUT UNLIMITED and the conservation work we do. OBTU is also a major supporter of the Illinois Council Trout Unlimited Youth Conservation & Fly-Fishing Camp providing volunteer leaders and funding.



STREAM GIRLS

OBTU'S newest program; STREAM Girls, employs STEM with recreation and arts to explore a local stream. Every person is a citizen of her watershed, and OBTU has partnered with Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois to show what that means to us. By visiting a local stream as scientists, anglers, and artists, girls will get the complete picture. Women OBTU members guide the participants in observing the stream, sampling macroinvertebrates, and learning to tie flies.