



1. President's Letter

Spring has arrived, and with it, our “busy season” is in full swing! We’ve been hard at work spreading the word about OBTU, with our dedicated members manning tables at the Chicagoland Fishing Expo, Tinley Park Expo, Climate of HOPE Conference, and the Earth Awareness Fair. As you read through this newsletter, you’ll find highlights of some of the exciting plans on the horizon for 2026.

All these activities and programs simply wouldn’t be possible without the incredible support of our donors, friends, partners, and especially our devoted volunteers.

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS! We want to express our heartfelt gratitude for the dedication, compassion, and energy you bring to OBTU. Your efforts make a real difference in the lives of those we serve. We deeply appreciate the time, skills, and generosity you share. We want to give a special “shout out” to the volunteer leaders who make the upcoming opportunities possible. And remember, for every leader of an activity, there are ten or twenty (or more) volunteers working behind the scenes. We could not do all of this without all of you.

As you plan your year, consider how you might become more engaged with our chapter and all it has to offer. If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, we invite you to join our team. Volunteering with OBTU is a truly rewarding experience—it offers the chance to make a positive impact on our environment, connect with new friends, and develop new skills. You can participate at any level. Don’t worry, there will be lots of friendly folks to explain, guide, and support you.

We look forward to seeing you out and about this spring and beyond!

Warm regards,

Dave

**“The Flyer” Spring 2026
Table of Contents:**

- 1. President’s Letter (see above)**
- 2. Conservation Update**
- 3. Education Update**
- 4. Holiday Party Celebration & Fund Raiser**
- 5. Upcoming Events**
- 6. OBTU Social Media Activities**
- 7. You are Invited to Join an OBTU Committee**



2. Conservation Update

Public Access is Now Available on a New Section of Iowa's Best Trout Stream.

Comments from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF):

Thanks to a flurry of donations from partner organizations and individual donors, the INHF met the fundraising goal to protect 21 acres northeast of Decorah in Allamakee County including a section of North Bear Creek.



INHF has worked with partners to expand public use around the adjacent North Bear Creek WMA, which is now owned by the state of Iowa and managed by the Iowa DNR. This unique site offers rare geological formations, a high-quality cold-water stream, and native woodland and prairie plant communities.

Preservation of the site includes protecting 0.35 miles of Bear Creek, a cold-water stream with naturally reproducing brown trout and catchable rainbow trout. The site may also include an algific talus slope—a rare landform where a steep north-facing hillside releases cool air from ice found in cracks and caverns underground.

The property is near Quandahl (just below the confluence of North and South Bear Creeks).

Comments from Mike Siepker, DNR Northeast Iowa Fisheries Supervisor:

“To help ensure this property was protected and opened to the public for recreational uses like fishing and hunting, our goal was to raise \$100,000 in private funds to make this project a reality. The project succeeded. I am very happy to report that the property was recently transferred to the Iowa DNR and is now permanently protected as part of the North Bear Creek Wildlife Management Area. Under DNR ownership, the property is now open to public use including fishing.”

Partner Donors:

- Elliott Donnelley Trout Unlimited
- Iowa Coldwater Conservancy
- Trout Unlimited North Bear Chapter
- Oak Brook Trout Unlimited
- MoKan Trout Unlimited
- Trout Unlimited Driftless Chapter
- Iowa Spring Creeks Trout Unlimited
- Trout Unlimited Iowa Council
- Hawkeye Fly Fishing Association
- Winneshiek Pheasants Forever

Opportunities like these seldom come around. This would not have been possible without the dedication of the INHF team and the unwavering support of our partners. Because of you, this property will now be open to the public in perpetuity. As the weather warms this spring, I hope you'll take time to visit your newest public property along Bear Creek! I hope you'll join us in Decorah on April 16th to celebrate our latest conservation achievement! As always, thank you so much for your support!!”

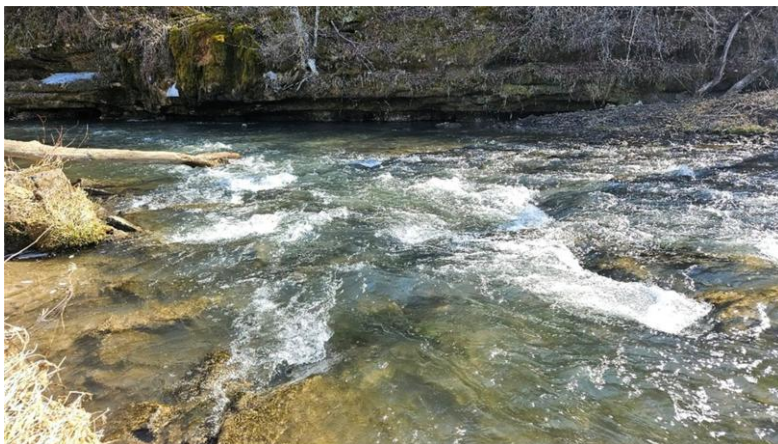
Mike Siepker, DNR Northeast Iowa Fisheries Supervisor



The aerial photo at left shows the boundaries of the acquired 21 acres.

Notice that the acquired area is contiguous with the existing 947-acre North Bear Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) & accessible from Quandahl Dr.

The property is now open to public use including fishing! This stretch supports wild brown trout and catchable rainbow trout.



Pictured at left: Sections of Bear Creek within the recently acquired property now owned by the State of Iowa and protected by the Iowa DNR.



OBTU Contributes to Yellow Dog Watershed Land Acquisition in Michigan's U.P.

OBTU has committed \$2000 to the acquisition of a 2-mile stretch of Yellow Dog River including 560 acres of land within the Yellow Dog Watershed (near Big Bay, MI). This project was brought to our attention by Doug Venerka, a founding member of OBTU who moved to the U.P. upon his retirement several years ago. Doug donated \$500 to the OBTU Conservation Fund and asked that it be contributed to the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve as a donation from OBTU. After reviewing this very worthwhile project, OBTU committed an additional \$1,500 for a total contribution of \$2,000. The project recently received a "Challenge Grant" from another donor, matching dollar for dollar up to \$200,000. So, the total effective impact of OBTU's contribution will be \$4,000.



"Generations of fly-fishermen and women have plied the riverbanks and currents here in pursuit of brook trout." Source: Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve web site.



YELLOW DOG
Watershed Preserve

The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, a 501 (c)(3) land trust, managed the acquisition process. Historically this tract of land was managed responsibly by a logging company and has been open to public use. However, a new owner recently determined the "highest and best use" of the land to be commercial real estate development which would have privatized the land, altered the natural landscape and restricted public access. Fortunately, the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve received a \$1 million grant from the JA Wollan Foundation and were also able to arrange a \$400,000 loan to complete the land acquisition deal. With the acquisition, the Yellow Dog Watershed now protects 1245 acres and 5 Yellow Dog River corridor miles.



*Not only are there brook trout in the river, but wildlife, including martens, wolves, and moose also thrive here.
Source: .” Source: Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve web site.*



OBTU is continuing our recurring commitments to “Hands On & Wet Boots” Work Days.

As in recent years, we have planned multiple 2026 workdays with each of the following partnering projects:



Coldwater River,
Michigan
Aquatic Insect Surveys
Next work day:
5/30/2026



SEWTU & OBTU
Rehabilitation of
SE Wisc. Trout Streams
Next work day:
4/25/2026



DuPage River
Cleanups, Naperville
(Adopt-a-Stream)
Next work day:
3/28/2026



Wisconsin Driftless
Highway Cleanups
(Adopt-a-Highway)
Next work day:
4/11/2026

Available details for these events can be found on the obt.org web site calendar. Also, watch for email invitations which will also include up-to-date details.

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3. Education Update

Two New Adult Fly Fishing Training Programs Being are being Launched This Spring.

1. OBTU Adult Fly Fishing for Trout Training Program

With a 20+ years of success providing youth fly fishing training, OBTU has long recognized the need to offer an adult course. Finally, an opportunity arose which has helped OBTU jump-start such a program. OBTU member Mark Stohl developed an excellent set of training materials for an adult fly-fishing course. Mark offered his material as content for OBTU's adult training. Thank you Mark!

Earlier this year a committee comprised of OBTU members Mark Stohl, Dave Carlson, Marvin Strauch and Phil Young was formed to implement the new training based on Mark's material. The resulting course consists of 3 evening classroom sessions, numerous reading & video assignments, and a trout fishing on-stream weekend in the Wisconsin Driftless Area.

The new OBTU adult "Fly Fishing for Trout" program received a strong response from registrants. The first program is scheduled to take place in April & May. For more details, see the "Adult Fly Fishing for Trout" downloadable flyer posted under the Education & Outreach/Adult Education tab on OBTU's web site: <https://obtu.org>

Contact: Dave Carlson at dmcarlson@hotmail.com

2. DuPage Forest Preserve Introduction to Fly Fishing (assisted by OBTU)

Last fall, OBTU was approached by the Forest Preserves of DuPage County regarding assistance with a fly fishing introductory program. Led by Marvin Strauch, OBTU collaborated with the DuPage Forest Preserves to develop a program consisting of 2 classroom sessions and a fly-fishing session on Salt Creek.

This program also received a strong response from registrants. The 1st class took place on March 12. The Forest Preserves covered "why fly fishing" and identified some local locations to fly fish. OBTU presented topics on fly fishing equipment and safety. The 2nd class on March 26 will include content on aquatic insect/fish identification by the Forest Preserves and a fly-tying session led by OBTU. The program will conclude on April 11 with an OBTU-led fly fishing session on Salt Creek within Fullersburg Woods. The Forest Preserves will discuss the Salt Creek rehabilitation/dam removal project completed there.

More details of this program are available in the calendar on OBTU's web site at: <https://obtu.org> (See calendar entries on March 12 & 26, April 11.)

Contact: Marvin Strauch at mjstrauchjr@gmail.com



3. Education Update - continued

Trout-in-the-Classroom (TIC) Wants You!

Spring kicks off a very busy season for OBTU Education Programs. OBTU is always looking for adult mentors and recruiting students for our youth programs.

We want you! We want you! We want you as a new recruit! (credit Village People)

2026 Trout-in-Classroom School (19 Schools served by OBTU)	Location
Bednarcik Junior High School	Aurora
Burroughs School	Chicago
Downers Grove North HS	Downers Grove
Gower Middle School	Burr Ridge
Grissom Middle School	Tinley Park
Gwendolyn Brooks	Oak Park
Kaneland HS	Maple Park
Lincoln Elementary School	Glen Ellyn
Northlake Middle School	Northlake
Prairie View Middle School	Tinley Park
Romeoville High School	Romeoville
Roosevelt Middle School	River Forest
St Patricia	Hickory Hills
St. John the Baptist	Winfield
St. Scholastica	Woodridge
The Children's School	Oak Park
Tinley Park HS	Tinley Park
Sts. Bruno & Richard School	Chicago
Social Justice HS	Chicago

Perhaps you would like to participate in TIC at a school near you?

There are many opportunities to help:

“Wet Bug Days” to be scheduled with participating schools in April.

”Trout Release” field trips May 11-15 need mentors.

It takes a big team of volunteers to pull this off! And: It's a most enjoyable duty!

Contact:

Marvin Strauch, Youth Education Chair

youthed@obtu.org 708-638-1318

This is TIC's 17 Year!

OBTU Youth Education Program Leaders:

OBTU's Youth Education programs continue to be among the best in Trout Unlimited as evidenced by the exceptional attention earned at the TU national level in recent years. OBTU is always in need of extra help from members. **We encourage you to contact any of the following leaders:**

Marvin Strauch, Youth Education Chair, and Trout-in-the-Classroom Leader, youthed@obtu.org , 708-638-1318

Mike Lesiak, Youth Fly Fishing Training Leader, mdlesiak100@gmail.com, 630-300-4997

Alexa Cottrell, Stream Girls Leader, Alexa.d.cottrell@gmail.com, 847-651-2818

Bruce Watkins, IL Council of TU, Youth Camp, bruce.a.watkins@gmail.com

If you are aware of youth who may be interested in attending any of our programs, please let us know!

4. OBTU 2025 Holiday Party Celebration & Fund Raiser:

OBTU's Holiday Party at Venuti's Italian Restaurant & Banquet Hall in Addison was held on the evening of December 10. This was the 3rd year OBTU held the Holiday Party at Venuti's and guests were treated to an excellent buffet dinner, a cash bar, 38 opportunities to win prizes through raffles & auctions and a very festive party atmosphere. The party was well attended by 52 guests, representing an increase of about 10% over recent years. A big thanks to Jim Dickens, OBTU Fund-Raising Chair, who led the planning and execution of this event. Numerous members also pitched in to chase down prizes and help with party preparations. OBTU's net proceeds from the event were over \$9,000 which was one of the best holiday party outcomes of the past 10 years. Funds raised from the Holiday Party go to the OBTU Operating Fund to meet operating costs including communications technology, meeting facilities & speakers, insurance, promotions, trade shows & other administrative costs. After meeting these operating expenses, surplus operating funds will be periodically transferred to the OBTU Conservation and Education Fund for our mission aligned services.



Jim Dickens (left), OBTU Fundraising Chair led party planning & execution. Well done!

Art Cottrell(right), OBTU Board Director served as "picker" of the winning tickets. Thanks Art!



A total of 38 prizes were awarded at the party. A partial display of "Silent Auction" & "Bucket Raffle" items is pictured.

OBTU continued the tradition of a holiday raffle with a few weeks of online and in-person ticket sales leading up to Grand Prize drawings at the Party. This year's Grand Prize winners:



Rod Raffle Grand Prize: *Alexa Cottrell (left), won the grand prize of her choice of Sage Rod. Alexa is famous within OBTU for serving as the leader of the chapter's "Stream Girls" program. Congrats & many thanks Alexa! Annie Vitti(right), OBTU Board Member and Outreach Committee Chair, celebrates with Alexa.*



Rod Raffle Runner Up: *Marvin Strauch, was awarded the 2nd place prize of his choice of Orvis waders. Marvin is currently an Emeritus OBTU Board Director & Chairman of the Education Committee. Marvin has served in many leadership roles including past OBTU President. Congrats & thanks for your many contributions!*

4. OBTU 2024 Holiday Party-continued



Fifty-two holiday party goers enjoyed a splendid atmosphere at Venuti's. The room was spacious with a display of silent auction and bucket raffle prizes pictured along the right rear wall. A full dinner buffet with generous food selections can be seen in the center of seven banquet tables. The cash bar can be seen in far corner of the ball room.

OBTU also thanks many organizations and individuals for their contributions which provided entertainment and enabled successful fund raising for OBTU. Donors and donated prizes are recognized below:

Donor	Donated Silent Auction Prize	Winning Bidder
Steve Shapiro	Small Mouth Kankakee Raft Trip in Steve's Raft	Steve Stricker
Jay Anglin	Guide Trip on Michigan's St. Joe or Dowagiac	Phil Young
Keven Feenstra	Guide Trip on Michigan's Muskegon River	Steve Shapiro
Jay Allen	Guide Trip on Michigan's Muskegon River Plus a Free Night's Lodging with purchase of a 2 nd night.	Keith Gabriel
Mike Siepker	Donated personal time to guide on NE Iowa streams.	Jack Potts
Jake Marthaler	SW Michigan Fly Fishing Guide Trip	Keith Gabriel
OBTU	Orvis Clearwater 4 wt Rod & Reddington Cross Water Reel	Carol Hennessy
Carol Hennessy	Dinner for 4 to 6 at your location. An elaborate gourmet dinner with wine pairings for each course.	Joe Vitti
OBTU	Umpqua Zs2 Chest Pack Kit	Bruce Berg
Marvin Strauch	Pierre Marquette Salmon Shadow Box	James Moravcik
Each Board member donated 1 bottle toward baskets 1 and 2.	Directors Wine Basket donated by OBTU Board Members	Joe Vitti
Patagonia	Patagonia Fishing Backpack	John Martyn
David George	Vintage Hardy Bamboo Rod 6ft 5in 5 weight Phantom Palakona	Joe Vitti

Thank you for your spirited bidding! Congratulations to the winners. We are fortunate to have great relationships with a few fishing guides who have donated guide trips for OBTU fund-raising for many years. **We request that everyone consider patronizing the guides who partner with us, as well as our business partners who make annual donations of merchandise & services for our raffles & auctions.**



4. OBTU Holiday Party-continued

At the party, it was plain to see that the buckets were crammed full of tickets. Thank you to bucket raffle prize donors! Our party prize donors are recognized below:

Bucket Raffle Prizes		
Donor	Donated Prize	Prize Winner
Mike Pempek	Beck Bamboo Rod 7ft, 8 weight	John Galloway
Marvin Strauch	Michigan Fly Selection Tied by Marvin Strauch	Ed Michael
Dale MacDonald	Driftless Fly Selection Tied by Dale MacDonald	Jack Potts
Keven Graham	Fly Collection tied by Keven Graham	Willie Beshire
O Sullivan's Pub of Forrest Park	\$50 Gift Card	Steve Anderson
Patagonia, Chicago Store	Patagonia Black Hole Duffel Bag (55 liter)	Steve Stricker
Tierra Distilling	Distilling Tour and Tasting for 8	Steve Shapiro
Rush Creek Distillery	Rush Creek Distillery Vodka and Bourbon	Alexa Cottrell
Seasons 52 Fresh Grill & Wine Bar of Oak Brook	Gift Certificate	Steve Anderson
Patagonia of Chicago	Patagonia Light Weight Towel & Large Waste Bag	Cheryl Galloway
Patagonia of Chicago	Refugio Day Pack (30 Leader)	Ken Kruger
Annie Vitti	Birding Basket including Binoculars and Roger T. Peterson Bird Identification Book	John Martyn
DuPage Fly Fishing Co.	Simms Fly Weight Tech Utility Belt	Alexa Cottrell
Cheryl Galloway	Hand Made and Painted Cigar Box	Keven Graham
Steve Shapiro	Fishpond Pescador Large Fly Box	Cheryl Galloway
OBTU inventory from past estate.	Stream Line 2.5 Vintage Reel for 7 to 9 weight	Patty Small
OBTU	Sage Basics Nippers, Forceps & Fly Box	Ron Koziol
Naperville Alliance	Naperville Shops Gift Card	Susan Vitti
Carol Hennessy	Minnesota Driftless DIY Package	Bruce Berg
Each Board member donated 1 bottle toward baskets 1 and 2.	OBTU Directors Wine Basket #2	Bob Smith
Fogo de Chao Steakhouse	Gift Certificate	Keven Graham
Filson Store of Naperville	Small Tin Cloth Travel Bag in Real Tree Camo	Phil Young



5. Upcoming Events

See below for the many upcoming 2026 events that have been scheduled. Please monitor the OBTU Calendar which includes key OBTU events, timing, who to contact and further details as they become available.

The Calendar with added details is on our chapter web site: obtu.org

Date(s)	Event
March 7	Fly Fishing Training: “Train-the-Trainers” Day was held. Location: Camp Sagawau learning center at the Forest Preserve.
March 12, March 26 & April 11	NEW: DuPage County Forest Preserve Intro to Fly Fishing program with OBTU help begins. Locations: 2 Class sessions at “The Preserve” at Oak Meadows, Addison, IL (6:30-8:00pm) 1 casting/fishing session at Salt Creek in Fullersburg Woods, April 11 (8:00-10:00am)
March 18	OBTU Monthly Membership Meeting Location: Oak Brook Recreation Center, Central Park West Building
March 22	Earth Awareness Fair: 20 conservation organizations from OBTU’s region participating. OBTU will be staffing a table at the fair. Location: Frankfort, Illinois, Library (2:00 to 4:00pm)
March 28	OBTU “Adopt-a-Stream” DuPage River cleanup Location: Pioneer Park in Naperville (9:00 to noon). Donuts & Coffee served at 8:30.
April 8, 15, 22 & Field Trip on Apr 25-26 or May 2-3	NEW: OBTU Adult Fly Fishing for Trout Course Begins Locations: 3 sessions at Grand Avenue Community Center in Western Springs, IL (6:30-9:30pm) 1 weekend fly fishing field trip on Wisconsin Driftless Area Trout Streams
April 8-12 fishing April 11 Cleanup	OBTU Wisconsin Driftless Area Fishing Outing including a 2 hour “Adopt-a-Highway” road cleanup on April 11. Plan your own schedule & accommodation. Join group dinner(s) & collaborate on fishing as desired.
April 15	OBTU Monthly Membership Meeting Location: Oak Brook Recreation Center, Central Park West Bldg. (7:00-9:00pm) Pizza at 6:00pm
Mid-April thru Early May	Trout-in-the-Classroom “Wet Bug Days” to be scheduled with participating schools. OBTU brings live aquatic insects into the classrooms and leads student classes.
April 25	Southeast Wisconsin Chapter of TU Workday SEWTU has once again invited OBTU to join them for a habitat workday at Tichigan Creek, near Waterford, WI.
May 2, Jun 6, Jul 11, Aug 8, & Sept 12	1st OBTU Youth Fly Fishing Class of 2026 to be conducted at Camp Sagawau with Maple Lake fishing session. Volunteers are needed to help mentor the students.
May 1-3	Trout Unlimited Midwest Regional Rendezvous takes place in Roscommon, Michigan. All members are invited to attend. See OBTU Calendar for details. There are 5 Saturday sessions for the season (9:00am-4:00pm).
May 11-15	Trout-in-the-Classroom Release Field trips. OBTU accompanies participating classes to Rock Creek (tributary of Kankakee River) to release their trout and conduct stream study activities. Many OBTU volunteers are needed.
May 20	OBTU Monthly Membership Meeting Location: Oak Brook Recreation Center, Central Park West Bldg. (7:00-9:00pm) Pizza at 6:00pm
May 30	Coldwater River Entomology Survey continues. OBTU surveys aquatic insects for inclusion in a Michigan state-wide data base to monitor stream health. Includes a Saturday morning sample collecting session with opportunities to fish before/after.



6. OBTU Social Media Activities

The Oak Brook Trout Unlimited Chapter has an active social media presence. Our primary objective is to extend OBTU's outreach to external audiences within our market place. Let us know if you would like to help strengthen OBTU's presence by improving and increasing our online content. You can help attract increased traffic to our sites by visiting and "liking" our content. Please follow us on:

Facebook page: Trout Unlimited Oak Brook Chapter.

Instagram: tuoakbrook.

Web Site: obtu.org or <https://obtu.org/>

Note: There are close to 400 Trout Unlimited chapters and multiple internet search engines that are used by our audience. If you put in an internet search argument of "TU", you will likely be directed to the TU National web site which includes a brief page on OBTU with minimal information on our chapter. Or, you could accidentally arrive at the wrong TU chapter's web site. There are also 3rd parties out there that play off our good name to attempt to direct traffic to their commercial site. We occasionally get feedback from people who are confused by arriving at a site they didn't expect. Take care to confirm you have arrived at the correct site!

Please check the obtu.org calendar for information details on upcoming events. OBTU Calendar web address: <https://obtu.org/obtu-events/>

7. You are Invited to Join an OBTU Committee

Would you like to get more involved in helping OBTU to improve and grow? We welcome new committee members.

A complete listing of OBTU board members and committee chairs is available on our obtu.org web site. Here is a web address to the OBTU Leadership page:

<https://obtu.org/about-us/leadership/>

If you have an interest, please do not hesitate to reach out to the OBTU Board member or committee leader of your choice.