

Wild Rivers Tribune

WILD RIVERS CHAPTER



TROUT UNLIMITED



NOVEMBER 2024

Chapter Report

By John Simonson, Chapter President

With the end of the 2024 inland trout season, it's time to turn our focus to 2025. WRTU Chapter has an action-packed agenda already for next year. We were recently awarded Trout Unlimited's Embrace a Stream Grant for work on Mosquito Brook. We have also decided to join the WI-DNR's Adopt A State Fishery Area program. The program is a 3-year commitment and WRTU Chapter works with the local WI-DNR fishery biologist for that area to put together the action plan. We are required to donate to the selected



fishery area a minimum of \$3000 per year, or 100 hours of habitat improvement labor, or a combination of both.

Last Spring I visited the Clam River State Fishery Area and noticed the river could use some serious help. Also, we have been working for years on the White River State Fishery Area and it needs our continued help to protect and preserve the wonderful White River Watershed. The WRTU Chapter board recently approved adopting the Clam River State Fishery Area in Burnett County and the White River State Fishery Area in Bayfield County. I am now in the process of finishing up the adopt a state fishery area applications for both rivers to submit to the WI-DNR in Madison. Nate Thomas and Craig Roberts, the WI-DNR fishery biologists have been very supportive and are looking forward to working with us. We will kick these two programs off in early 2025 and at the WRTU Chapter 2025 Expo, which will be held on April 5th, 2025 at Flat Creek Lodge Convention Center again.

Finally, I am excited to announce Wendy Williamson has joined the WRTU Chapter Board. She does so much to teach the sport to kids and women and she will be a great asset to our chapter. Wendy donated her time, guiding and expertise to Rivers of Recovery outings for women veteran this year. Please join us in welcoming Wendy to the WRTU Chapter board.



Wendy Williamson working with the next generation of Wisconsin anglers.

Adopting the Clam River State Fishery Area in Burnett County

Craig Roberts is the WI-DNR fishery biologist for Burnett County and we are working on the final details for the 3-year habitat project plan. This is a wonderful brook and brown trout stream that needs habitat improvement. The Clam River Fishery Area encompasses all of class 1 and class 2 trout waters in Burnett County. Some of the ideas we have been discussing are stream brushing, restoring old trails, fix/replace previous habitat stream work done 10+ years ago. Also, identifying and improving trout spawning areas if needed. We will have several stream workdays in 2025, and I hope WRTU members in the Burnett, Sawyer and Washburn Counties will come out and help. Any comments or suggestions, please email me at: john@wiflyfisher.com.

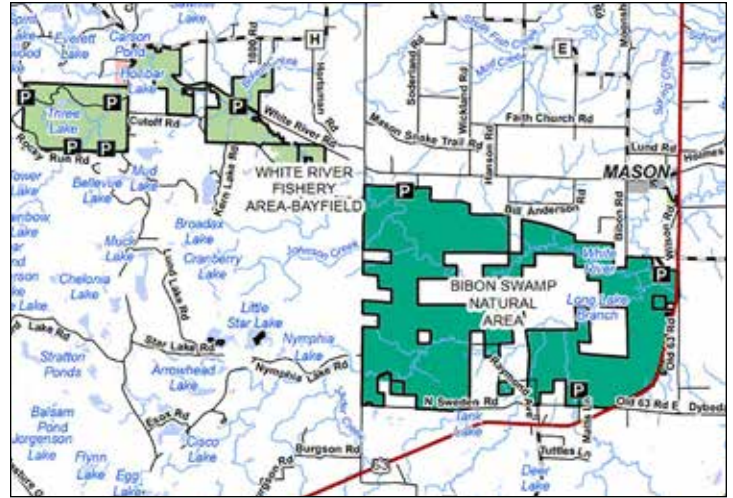


Upcoming WRTU Chapter Events

April 5, 2025 – WRTU Expo at Flat Creek Lodge in Hayward

Adopting the White River State Fishery Area in Bayfield County

WRTU Chapter members have been working for many years on the White River watershed with the WI-DNR. Some of the future activities I have been discussing with Nate Thomas, the WDNR fishery biologist for Bayfield County are adding six more angler creel survey boxes for 2025, continuing to remove the evasive buckthorn, more tree planting along the river, and pit-tagging young of the year brook and brown trout to help better understand fish movement throughout the watershed. Any comments or suggestions, please email me at: john@wiflyfisher.com.



Landowner Access and Volunteers Needed for Bayfield County's Iron River

By Andrew Teal (Bayfield County Land & Water Conservation Department)

Yellow iris, an invasive perennial wetland plant with showy yellow flowers, hot pink rhizomes, round seeds, and sword-shaped leaves, exists in the stretch of the Iron River between Iron Lake and the Iron River Millpond/Flowage. Based on the observed number of mature plants, it has the appearance of having been there for decades. The Bayfield County Aquatic Invasive Species Project Coordinator, DNR staff, and Northwoods Cooperative Weed Management Area summer crew members have all been out to see a small portion of that area of the Iron River, primarily within a few hundred yards up- and downstream of Iron Lake Road at the culvert crossing. We reached out to Wild Rivers Trout Unlimited (big thank you to Kevin Seefeldt and Chris Collier!) to request assistance in creating a plan of action to address the yellow iris and to ask for volunteer help. Several reasons include but are not limited to:

1. This stretch of the Iron River is a Class 2 trout stream. Trout like cold water, but in a few places we could see where the yellow iris is building up clumps that collect sand and other sediment. This, in turn, is causing the water flow to slow down when passing through the plants or reducing the width of the stream channel.
2. Yellow iris expansion can crowd out native plants that are beneficial to wildlife and fish. It is also poisonous to humans and animals if eaten, and the sap can cause skin irritation.
3. We realized that pulling and/or digging the yellow iris would be a huge undertaking (if that is the course of action we all decide on), because of the sheer number of plants. If allowed, much of the vegetation could theoretically be "disposed of in place", meaning that the plants are moved up onto dry land or hung up in trees to dry out. This strategy was allowed on a stretch of the Brule River because of similarly difficult-to-access sites; however, much of the land in that area is state-owned. If disposal in place is not allowed on the Iron River, the vegetation would likely need to be bagged up and hauled out.
4. Landowner permission for properties along the Iron River would be extremely helpful and appreciated. Whether that permission allows removing plants that may be above the ordinary high water mark, quickly traversing dry land to reach a work site, hauling out bags filled with plant material, or just having a place to rest, it would make the goal easier to achieve.



Thank you for reading and for your continued support. This project is in the early stages of planning and is likely to be in a holding pattern until at least spring 2025, since the DNR Lake Superior Aquatic Invasive Species Biologist position is currently open. For more information about yellow iris, please contact Andy Teal at 715-373-3417 or Andrew.teal@bayfieldcounty.wi.gov.

Embrace a Stream (EAS) - Mosquito Brook Watershed Baseline

By Frank Pratt (WRTU Chapter Board Vice President)

Our Embrace A Stream grant proposal for Mosquito Brook Watershed is in final stages of approval by TU National.

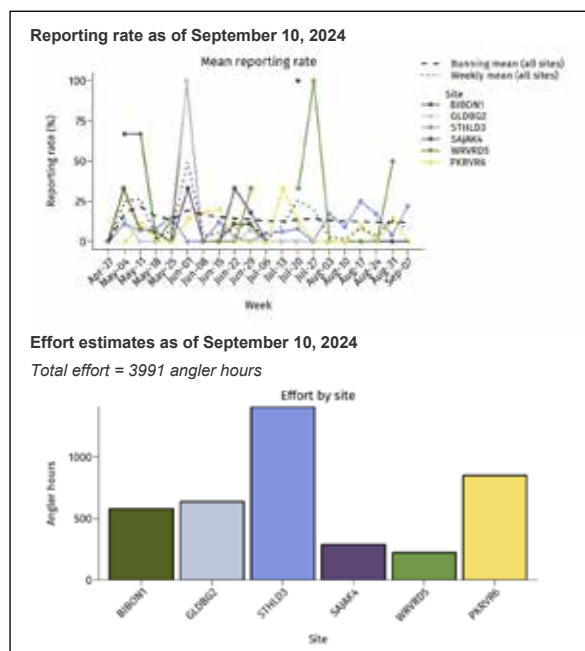
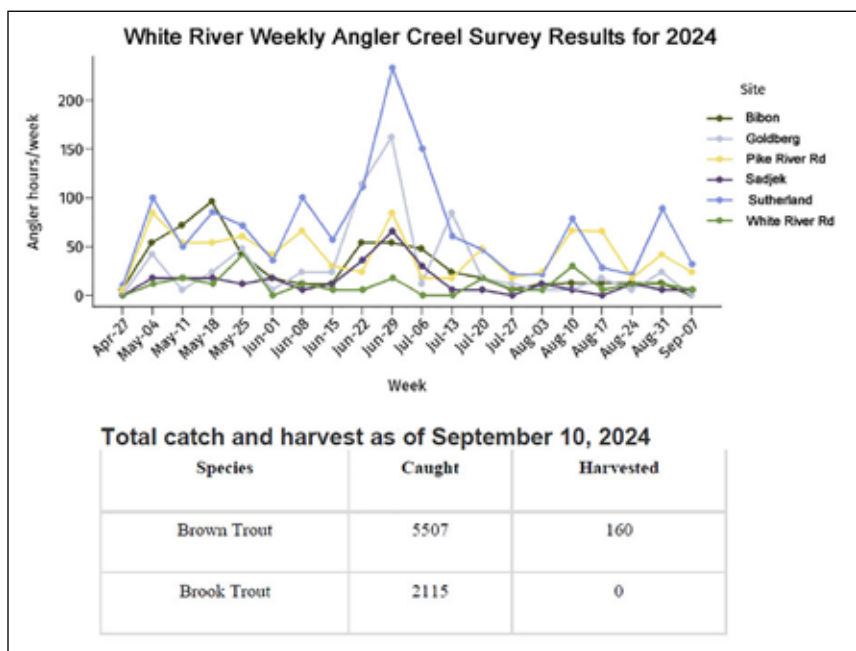
The WRTU Chapter will buy sampling equipment (mini-fyke nets, thermistors, etc..) for use by students from Northern Waters Environmental School in Hayward. They will sample the fish population in the headwaters of Mosquito Brook, including the old de-watered flowage. In addition, the "Human Watershed" (partners, stakeholders) will be researched and contacted relative to their interest and input: Ultimately into sitting down and writing a full-blown and comprehensive Watershed Plan, focused on climate resiliency.

So, the current EAS is only the first step (2025), followed by The Plan, followed by sky is the limit consensus action. And TU provides a great "match website" which has proven to be a great engine for outside funding. It is not unreasonable that this grant may be our last request for TU money. As a key tributary to the nation's first Wild River, with the trail for the world's largest cross-country ski race going right through the middle of the watershed, this should be very fertile soil to grow outside financial support.

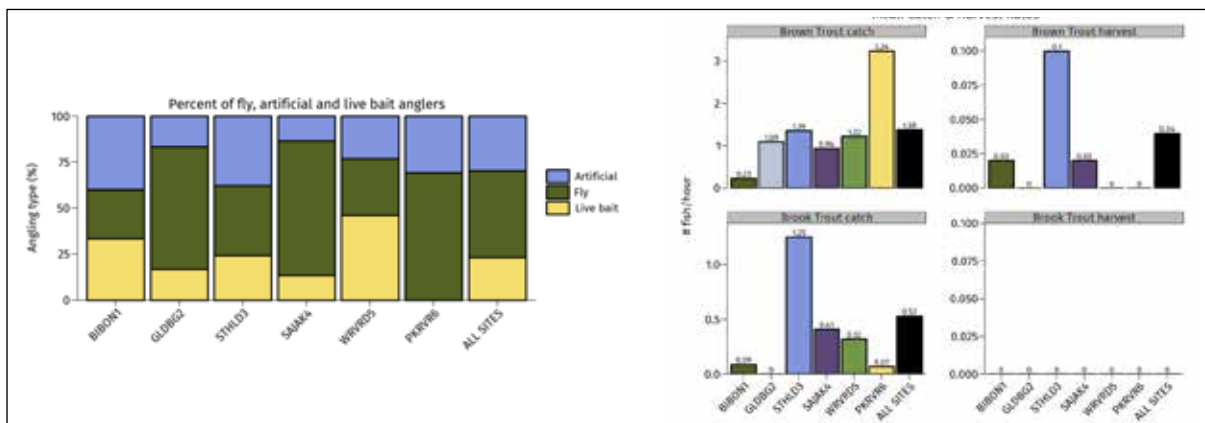


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White River Angler Creel Survey



The White River Angler Creel Survey that we started with the WDNR and WRTU Chapter this year was very successful and will be continued in 2025.



WI Women Fish: Intermediate Women's Fly Fishing Clinic

By Heather Wisner

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Wild Rivers TU for sponsoring me to be able to attend the WI Women Fish: Intermediate Women's Fly Fishing Clinic in June of 2024. I was so excited to meet and connect with more fly fishing folks especially women, coming up to that week I had to work three 12's and a four hour shift back to back so I could have the time off for this event.

I got down to the event early in the afternoon and they were immediately pairing folks off with guides to try and get a couple hours of fishing in that evening. I was quickly paired with a guide and off we went to see what my skills were and how to best help me through the weekend. The guides who volunteer at this clinic do this and give their time and expertise to help the women who join hone their skills to fly fish.

We changed my leader and my fly to a "hippy stomper" and we were in business after climbing down into the small stream we were going to fish. We talked about techniques, casts, a little about both of us and our passion for fishing, it wasn't long before I caught my very first brown trout.

We fished for a while longer and I added a couple more little browns to my new catch record. Because I know I'm clumsy in the rivers I don't usually take my phone and we were told that our guides would take pictures. As twilight started to set we decided to head back. A second guide had come with us and he was struggling to help his person catch a couple fish and asked if my guide could help. I smiled and said absolutely! Go fish! So while they helped the other person who was out, I waited on the tailgate and enjoyed the beauty of the night. I was truly excited to be there and had caught my first browns!

The next two days we were on the rivers around Viroqua and Westby. We camped, we fished, we told fish stories and shared meals together. I worked on my techniques, learning my own gear a bit better and truly enjoyed my time with everyone there.

I ended up catching about a dozen browns. I still have a lot of work to do on my techniques as I'm so used to throwing big lures and rods chasing northerns and musky that it is truly a challenge for me to lightly flick a tiny fly.

The fish were only too happy to feed on my inexperience and everyone was truly a joy to spend time with. It was a unique experience walking through pastures of grazing cows with a fishing rod in my hands eager to find more trout. I hope I can get back next year as they asked us to join them as river buddies for future women anglers. I eagerly look forward to that opportunity.

What a grand experience! I left the clinic sad that I could not stay longer and eager for more fish. Mostly I was inspired, and I hope that I can bring that to our local rivers and inspire others.

Thank you Wild Rivers for an fantastic opportunity. Sadly, I have not received any pictures from the event so I will share them when they do arrive. In the meantime, I'll share a picture of me representing WRTU on the Guadalupe River in Texas last year where I caught some fantastic rainbows.



Embrace a Stream *(continued from page 3)*

At this moment in time it is safe to say that WRTU will be deeply involved in the entire process, but not necessarily as the lead. That will be one of the items addressed by the future planning process. Looking into the crystal ball and operating out of personal experience and preference I am betting on one of the land conservancies, Sawyer County Forestry or Lands and Waters, and maybe a dark horse like The American Birkebeiner Foundation. The WIDNR or NPS? Not my first choice. And I am not worried about consensus since our already stated EAS objective is climate resiliency. That goes straight to ground-water conservancy and carbon sequestration, and ultimately conserving brook trout and brown trout long-term (year 2100) in the watershed. TU is providing the spark. I expect an explosion of interest and involvement. Stay tuned.

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Reel Recovery

By Ken Benoit

REEL RECOVERY is an international non-profit organization that conducts fly-fishing retreats for men recovering from cancer. Its mission is to help men in the recovery process by sharing with them the healing powers of the sport of fly-fishing, while providing a safe, supportive environment to explore their personal experiences with cancer, with others who share their stories. Combining expert fly-fishing instruction with directed "courageous conversations", the organization offers men with all forms of cancer a unique opportunity to share their stories, learn a new skill, form lasting friendships and gain renewed hope as they confront the challenges of cancer.



Retreats are offered at no cost to the participants and are led by professional facilitators and expert fly-fishing instructors (Fishing Buddies). The September 4 - 6, 2024 event that I participated as a Fishing Buddy was my second tour with Reel Recovery. The retreat was held in Eau Claire Wisconsin for two and half days. At the start of the retreat each participant picks out a fishing vest and puts their name, city and state they are from as shown below. You can see there are other men with cancer participating in this event before them with their names on the fishing vests. It gives the participants a feeling they are not alone with their battle with cancer.

One participant commented: "Thank you for helping me see there's a light at the end of this tunnel. I will never forget these few days."

It was very gratifying and humbling sharing fly fishing with others and talking through my own family experience of cancer with my partner who has cancer. Below is a group shot of all the cancer participants, staff and fishing buddies in the September 2025 Retreat in Eau Claire Wisconsin.

As they say in the retreat: Be Well! Fish On!

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