

Wild Rivers Tribune

WILD RIVERS CHAPTER



TROUT UNLIMITED



OCTOBER 2025

Chapter Report

By John Simonson, Chapter President

Summer seemed to fly by for me, and it gave me time to reflect on all the things WRTU Chapter has accomplished so far this year. I am so proud of our chapter for adopting two state fishery areas within our TU area. Both the Clam River State Fishery Area in Burnett County and the White River State Fishery Area in Bayfield County are definitely worth protecting and preserving. I feel we have a great partnership with our local DNR fishery biologists that make these things possible.



A couple of us from WRTU Chapter spent a day with the Burke Center and the DNR on North Fish Creek. Due to the 2018 flooding a hillside washed in the North Fork of Fish Creek. Matt Hudson and his team along with federal funding were able to reroute the river into a new channel to avoid further issues with the washed-out hillside. Their work is amazing, and this is just one phase of the work the Burke Center has been doing on the Fish Creek watershed to stop the sediments from washing into the river and Lake Superior.

At our September WRTU Board meeting Jason Nelson gave a wonderful PowerPoint presentation on how we might be able to improve fishermen's access on both the North Fish Creek and the Iron River system. Thanks to Jason's efforts I am now in discussion with the DNR on how we can get this done in the future. Lastly, I added two new videos to our WRTU YouTube channel. I did an interview with Craig Roberts from Wisconsin DNR. Craig gave us an overview of the state of the trout fishery in the Clam River State Fishery Area. The other video is I was onsite with the Burke Center and the DNR for rerouting North Fish Creek to a new channel. Excellent work done by the Burke Center. See: <https://youtu.be/vEFqUv82pQE>.

Upcoming Chapter Events

Below is a brief overview for some of the WRTU Chapter upcoming events:

October 7, 2025 - North Fork of Clam River Workday

October 8, 2025 - Annual Brule River Gathering

October 15, 2025 - North Fork of Clam River Workday

October 16, 2025 - North Fork of Clam River Workday

October 22, 2025 - South Fork of White River Workday

Improving Fishing Access to Iron River & Fish Creek

By Jason Nelson, WRTU Member

Wisconsin is blessed with 13,000 miles of trout streams offering a wide array of angling opportunities for people all over the state. The WRTU is focused on the far northern part of the state. This area differs greatly from the more popular Driftless area. Many of the streams flow through public lands but access remains difficult due to the highly dense forests. Even with many workdays on various northern streams it can be virtually impossible to keep up with the fast alder growth.

As we think ahead to 2026, we have an opportunity to focus on a couple of the larger watersheds in the region, the Iron River and Fish Creek. Both rivers are high quality fisheries and are large enough to provide exceptional angling experiences. The Iron River (above Orienta falls) is a high-quality brown trout fishery while Fish Creek supports both stream trout and migratory species.

Fish Creek does have a couple of access points along Highway G but needs some work maintaining the trails. They are currently way overgrown and somewhat difficult to navigate to the river.

The Iron River flows mainly through private land with limited access.

We will need to partner with the DNR and assess the feasibility of future easement opportunities. The DNR is also planning on doing electro shocking surveys during the summer of 2026 to better understand the overall health of the fishery. Lots of work yet to be done as these are still in early-stage discussion. We are excited to add them to our ever growing project list; with the end goal of substantially increasing our "fishable" miles of river in the Wisconsin northern region.



Fish Creek: Overgrown access but a nice river.

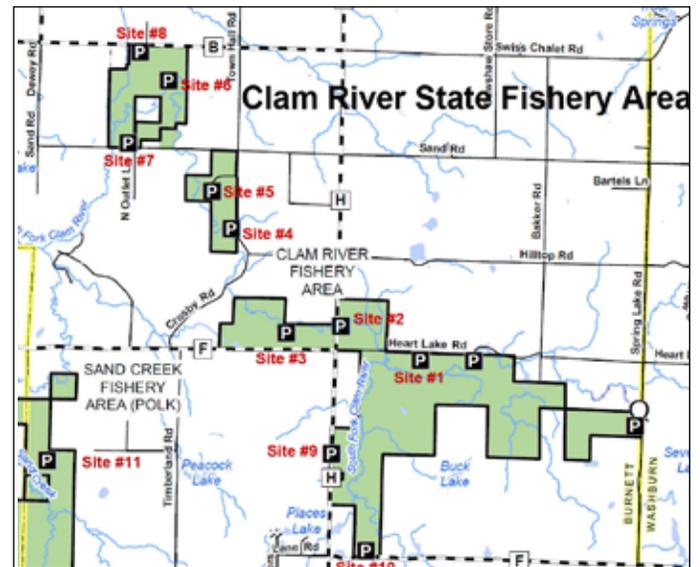


Iron River is a high quality fishery but lacks public land accessibility.

October 2025 North Fork Clam River Workdays

- **Tuesday October 7:** Instream luncker structure repair at Heart Lake Road (Access Site 1) and at Rockaway (Access Site 5).
- **Wednesday October 15:** Brushing and weed whacking
- **Thursday October 16:** Brushing and weed whacking

Please call or email **Ken Benoit** at 218-393-1479 or email Ken at troutster80@gmail.com or **Larry Mann** to sign up for the workdays. Lunch will be provided by TU on workdays. Everyone will meet at the Fishing access site on Heart Lake Road east of the bridge on Heart Lake Road (See Map) at 9:00 am on all the days and get done by 4:30 pm. Parking is limited at the access site, so some will need to park along the side of the road (Heart Lake Road). For instream luncker structure maintenance/repair you will need waders, gloves. For brushing and weed whacking you will not need waders, but gloves, loppers, chain saw if certified and suitable eyewear.



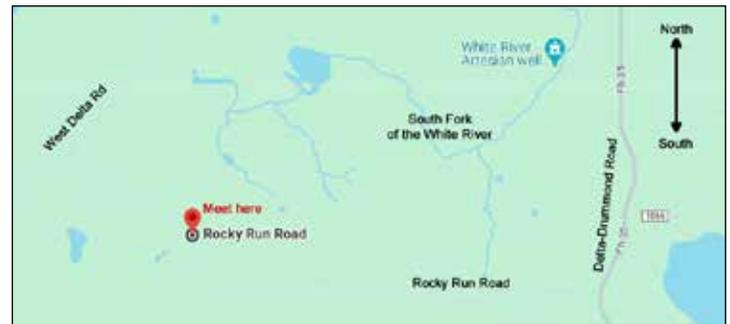
South Fork of the White River Fall Workday

Date: Wednesday October 22

Start Time: 9:00 AM

Location: Rocky Run Road, south of the Town of Delta (See Map).

The WRTU Chapter along with the DNR will be removing buckthorn sprouts along the South Fork of the White River. All you need is some boots and gloves. We will probably work until around noon. In case of rain, we will then cancel. Please RSVP John Simonson at john@wiflyfisher.com if you plan to attend.



White River DNR Shocking and Tagging Trout

By Nate Thomas

A passive integrated transponder (PIT) and visible implant elastomer (VIE) tagging study was initiated during biannual stream shocking surveys of wadable trend sites in the upper White River watershed in August 2025. Age-0 (fish < 4 inches) and age-1 (fish 4-6 inches) brown and brook trout were tagged in Twenty-mile, 18-mile, Long Branch, South Fork and East Fork. The main purpose of this study was to determine growth rates and better understand fish movement throughout the watershed and if these headwater tributaries are a source of recruitment for the popular sport fishery downstream in the Bibon Swamp. The PIT tags have a unique ID # so when these fish are recaptured in future surveys, we can compare the size of the fish to when it was tagged and determine growth rates. For example, if a fish was initially tagged in August of 2025 at 3.0 inches long and recaptured in August of 2027 at 8.2 inches, we know it grew 5.2 inches in 2 years. Movement of tagged fish will be determined based on where the fish was initially tagged and where it was recaptured. In addition to these wadable trend sites in the upper watershed we also survey a four-mile section of the main stem of the White River just downstream of Sutherland Bridge in the Bibon Swamp every two years with the next survey planned for 2027. Tagged fish that are recaptured in the Sutherland Bridge section would inform relative contribution of fish to the Bibon Swamp fishery. Additionally, each PIT tagged fish was marked with a VIE tag as an external mark so PIT tagged fish can be determined through visual observation without having to scan each fish with a PIT tag reader.

Tagging numbers with VIE colors used by stream are as follows:

- East Fork (blue VIE) – 0 Brook Trout & 68 Brown Trout
- South Fork (red VIE) – 54 Brook Trout & 157 Brown Trout
- Long Branch (green VIE) – 57 Brook Trout & 2 Brown Trout
- 18 mile (yellow VIE) – 106 Brook Trout & 104 Brown Trout
- 20 mile (orange VIE) – 167 Brook Trout & 26 Brown Trout



October Brule River Annual Outing

Wild Rivers Chapter of Trout Unlimited is hosting our annual mid-week outing on **Wednesday October 8th, 2025 3:30 to dusk**. We have reserved **campsite #30 in the Copper Range Campground in the Brule River State Forest** (13866-13896 Park Rd, Brule, WI 54820).

Attend our Brule River outing and you have a chance to win a brand new Simms Tributary Sling Pack or a couple of other new Simms products!! No purchase necessary.

- **Katti Renik**, Great Lakes Project Coordinator for Trout Unlimited will be joining us and will be available to share TU's new outreach initiative as well as a follow-up to her Tuesday night's presentation, Beavers vs Trout.
- **Jason Nelson** will also be attending and willing to explain his Project Outline to create better angler access to Bayfield County's Iron River north of Hwy 2.
- Bring a lawn chair, fishing gear, and your favorite beverage. We will cook brats, some beverages, and side dishes. **Free and open to anyone.**



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