



Hap-Hazzard News April 2024

Upcoming Events (details below):

- April 21. Owego Creek cleanup day with Tioga County SWCD.
- April 27. West Branch Delaware annual cleanup.
- May 4. Annual Chenango Valley State Park kids fishing day. 10 AM – Noon. We will have a table there and need some volunteers for fly tying and casting lessons. Please come!
- May 6. Final restoration and tree planting at west branch Owego Creek new pool diggers.
- May 14. Chapter meeting at 7 PM; Endwell Fire Station, 3508 Country Club Rd., Endwell.
- May 19. Women's Fly Fishing Day with Chenango Valley Chapter. South Otselic DEC Fish Hatchery.
- June 15. Chapter Summer Barbecue. Bob Mead's Delaware River Pavilion. Details TBD.

It's a Busy Spring! Event Details:

- On Sunday, April 21, The Tioga County Community Stream cleanup day will be from 10am-1pm at Howland Farm at 1555 Blodgett Rd. in celebration of Earth Day. This is a joint event between the Al Hazzard Chapter and the Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District. We are cleaning the northern and southern side of the Blodgett road bridge along the Owego Creek a few miles north of the village of Owego. Please park along the north side of the poultry barn. We will meet in the gambrel style barn across the street from the poultry barn for a quick overview of the land and safety debriefing, then we will head out to the creek. Restrooms are available in the gambrel style barn. Additional event details are at our Facebook page. This section of the creek is public fishing access and has some great trout habitat. Come join us and scope out some nice fishing spots!

- On Saturday April 27, we will hold our annual Delaware River cleanup day in conjunction with our friends of the Chenango Valley chapter. Note the new time; Meet at 10 AM at the Deposit Fireman's Park, Deposit to start with coffee and donuts. Dress appropriately and come ready for a rewarding day with our friends at the Chenango Valley Chapter and then go fishing!
- On Monday May 6 at 11 am, we will meet with the Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District to help them plant trees and do final restoration at our two new pool diggers (picture below) at the upper West Creek Rd. public fishing access site along the west branch of the Owego Creek. The Google Maps address is 9200 County Rd. 208). This is a prime wild brook and brown trout section of the stream. Bring your fishing gear!



- On Sunday May 19, the Chenango Valley chapter will hold their annual women's free fly fishing day for women. It will be at the NYSDEC Fish Hatchery in South Otselic, NYS Rt. 26, beginning at 10:30 AM. There will be two groups; beginner and experienced. The experienced group must be in their waders by 10:45 AM. Each group will have only 10 participants. There is no cost and lunch will be provided. Pre-registration is required at: (<https://tu.myeventscenter.com/event/Womens-Free-Seminar-Fly-Fishing-Day-89546?redir=1>). Participants must notify Sam Scafidi at sscafidi@roadrunner.com as to what group they intend to participate in as soon as registered. Ages of participants must be 16 and over.

Message from the President:



Technology -vs- Trout

Technology is sometimes our best friend, and sometimes our worst. There have been huge advancements in fly rods, fly line, rain gear, fly tying materials, wader / wading boot construction and materials. Cell phones give us peace of mind should we break down roadside or if we have a fall and need assistance.

However with this technology there is a dark side. The cell phone, apps and the internet are being used in ways that are not natural resource friendly. I visit Facebook daily, mostly as entertainment but also to communicate with friends. If you do a search for Brook Trout for instance, you will find groups like “Brook Trout Nation”, “Native Brook Trout Chasers”, “All Things

Brook Trout” to name a few. I guess the intent is to share the passion of fishing with likeminded fisher people (being politically correct of course). What I occasionally read within these groups is that someone will post a question like this:

“I’m new into fishing and looking for help on where to go so that I can catch my first trout. Any help would be appreciated.”

Well, this may sound innocent at first but could possibly be what is referred to as a “troll”. Those offering to help this person often will give out almost exacting locations to try. Inevitably everyone in the group reads this information and next time you go to your secrete spot, there are cars parked, people fishing and even camping there. To make matters worse, in the same group people will post photos of the fish they caught on a stringer saying, “thank you for the help” You cannot undo this, and I don’t see a solution. We need to be helpful, get people involved and interested in fishing as it will preserve the heritage but please be careful as this may be intercepted. The 2024 season is now upon us, and I wish you a good season. Get out there and enjoy it while you can.

John Swider

Owego Creek Strategic Plan Review



On March 16, we held a public workshop to finalize the Owego Creek Strategic Plan. About 50 local anglers and conservationists attended and provided valuable advice and support. We are now starting the grant-writing program to fund the plan activities and have started detailed work planning. The plan summary is as follows:

Vision: Trout Unlimited will work with local partners to better understand the trout populations, spawning habitats, threats and opportunities in the Owego Creek watershed and continue the implementation of survey, management and improvement projects that reconnect, restore and sustain brook and brown trout populations.

Why Owego Creek?: The Owego Creek watershed was chosen by TU as a priority watershed based upon the size, quality and interconnectedness of its brook trout habitats. Brook trout in this system reach 18” and brown trout reach 24”. It is the largest, most intact brook trout system (our official State fish) in western New York. It also hosts a substantial naturally reproducing brown trout population. It receives several cold groundwater inputs in a rural, primarily forested landscape, thus making it a strong candidate for long-term resilience.

The Water and its Trout: The Owego/Catatonk Creek watershed lies primarily in Tioga County, with important spawning headwaters also in Tompkins and Cortland Counties. Although the Owego and Catatonk systems are generally thought of as separate, they in fact join above the Village of Owego, thus making the Catatonk a tributary of the Owego. This is a critical distinction for trout management because some of the best trout spawning areas are in the headwaters of the Catatonk.

Before 2010, brook and brown trout were reported to be abundant with catch rates of up to 5-10 fish/hour documented in prime habitats. After that, a steep, more than 50% decline in the population was noted. The populations of both species remain low. Catch rates of 1-2/hour are now reported. The cause of this precipitous decline is suspected to be a series of major flood events and flash droughts that began in 2005 and which eliminated multiple years of spawning effort:

What We Will Do: We will act to restore connectivity to maximize the ability of trout to migrate seasonally, especially to spawning reaches and cold-water refuges and to complete other projects that enhance spawning, flood and drought resiliency to restore the wild brook and brown trout population to their pre-flood and pre-drought level of abundance:

Assessment: Identify critical spawning tributaries and cold water refuges, conduct electrofishing surveys and identify culverts and dams that are barriers to trout movements and spawning.

Reconnection: Replace barrier culverts with larger structures and remove or modify dams to allow fish passage.

Habitat Improvement: Stabilize eroding banks and add woody material to over-wide, shallow downstream reaches, replace or install pool diggers at priority locations and consider the creation of cold, groundwater ponds that are connected to the stream for summertime refuge. Manage key spawning areas and consider reintroduction of brook trout to suitable unoccupied tributaries that were cut off by dam or culvert barriers.

Outreach: Promote a catch and release ethic for brook trout to help the population recover. Form an Owego Creek steering committee to collect data and advice from the angling community, update the plan annually and conduct annual workshops. Maintain communication with local municipalities and conservation organizations.

What You Can Do: First, release all brook trout to help the population recover. Take a picture of any stream culvert whose outlet is so high above the stream below that no trout can make it through and email it with location data to TU coordinator Allen Peterson at Allenpeterson54@gmail.com. Do the same thing if you see any tributaries with young trout <3" long. Finally, spread the word that things are happening on Owego Creek

DEC Presents its Draft Adirondack Brook Trout Plan

The DEC Fisheries Bureau is putting the finishing touches on its Adirondack ponded waters brook trout management plan. This plan, first written in the late 1970's when acid rain was the primary threat, was updated with significant help from a citizen focus group that included members from area TU chapters and the State Council Conservation Committee. DEC staff recently held a video conference with NY TU members and the public to give an overview of the new plan. Some key points, and interesting background facts include the following:

- Brook trout occur in 398 ponded waters in the Adirondacks. 250 are stocked with Temiscamie strain fish, 51 are stocked with heritage strains, 84 are wild and 13 are being stocked with an experimental Temiscamie – Heritage cross.
- Brook trout historically occurred in all the major lakes and ponds between Tupper Lake, Saranac Lake and Lake Placid. They have been eliminated from about 90% of these waters by introduced game and bait species.
- Introduced bait fish not only reduce brook trout spawning success, they also cut about a year's worth of growth off each age class of surviving trout.
- The plan will focus on re-emphasizing the adverse effects of bait fish and prohibit the use of bait fish inside the Adirondack Park, except for a sizeable list of lakes and large ponds where there is no significant brook trout fishery.
- The plan sets a goal of re-establishing self-sustaining heritage strains of brook trout in 20 ponds.
- DEC will use teams of volunteer anglers in as surveillance teams to conduct citizen science efforts to collect population information.

The completed plan will be released later this year.

DEC Stocking Locations and Schedule 2024

Here is the link to the full DEC trout stocking schedule for this year: <https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/freshwater-fishing/stocking/spring-trout-stocking>.

I quickly reviewed it for our area and did not notice any significant changes. I did see that there is no stocking of rainbow trout in the system. I don't know if that is usually the case.

A New Broome County Fishing Group!

There is a new fishing organization in Broome County. It is called Broome County Anglers and it is modelled after Tioga County Anglers. Their introductory announcement is this:

“We are thrilled to introduce Broome County Anglers, a proud partner of Tioga County Anglers. As a dedicated 501(c)(3) nonprofit environmental conservation organization, our passion lies in the heart of revitalizing our local fishery. Our commitment extends beyond the present, aiming to ensure a sustainable and vibrant aquatic ecosystem for future generations.

At Broome County Anglers, our mission is crystal clear: to protect and enhance the local native and stocked fishery of our waters. Through conservation efforts, educational programs, and community engagement, we strive to foster a deeper connection between people and the aquatic world around us. Join us in our journey to make a lasting impact. Together, we can preserve the beauty and diversity of our waters, guaranteeing a rich fishing heritage for generations to come. Let's cast our lines into the future, working hand in hand to safeguard our aquatic treasures.

[Dive in with Broome County Anglers – Where Conservation Meets Passion.](#)”

Find them on Facebook at
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61557219686257>

We wish them the best!

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Web Links

Al Hazzard Chapter Website:
<https://alhazardtu.org>

Al Hazzard Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/alhazardtroutunlimited>

NYS Council Website:
<https://newyorkcouncil-tu.org>

NYS Council Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/newyorktu>

TU Events Calendar:
<https://tu.myeventscenter.com/browseByState/NY/1>

