



[Login](#) [Register](#) [e-Newsletters](#) [Contests](#) [Coupons](#) [Place an Ad](#) [Subscriber Services](#) 

WEATHER WATCH:

Milwaukee, WI

50°



high 50° | low 46°

[Detailed Forecast](#) | [7 Day](#) | [Doppler Radar](#)[Home](#) [News](#) [Watchdog](#) [Opinion](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Food & Dining](#) [Entertainment](#) [Features](#) [Photo/Video](#)Saturday, October 3, 2009 [Main Page](#) [Michael Hunt](#) [Packers](#) [Brewers](#) [Bucks](#) [UW](#) [MU](#) [UWM](#) [State](#) [Preps](#) [Golf](#) [Auto](#) **Outdoors**[Home](#) » [Sports](#) » [Outdoors](#)**Paul Smith** | **Outdoors Editor**[E-mail](#)

## Area trout group is golden

Posted: Aug. 19, 2009

Ask people to conjure an image of a cold-running, fish-filled stream and most will access the Montana or Alaska file.

You know, drift boats on a riffled river with snow-capped peaks in the background. Or migrating salmon leaping through rapids in the midst of snapping brown bears.

But southeastern Wisconsin? With its predominant warm-water rivers and sparse cold-water creeks largely choked by more than 100 years of intense development, the region doesn't spring to mind.

But that doesn't mean the people of our area don't care for cold-water resources. In fact, according to Trout Unlimited, about 600 local residents are champions in that department.

Thanks to its yeoman conservation work in recent years, the Milwaukee-based TU chapter - Southeast Wisconsin Trout Unlimited - has been named winner of the 2009 TU Gold Trout Award.

On Friday, a delegation of SEWTU members will receive the highest TU chapter honor in a ceremony at the organization's national convention in Traverse City, Mich.

"Just amazing," said Henry Koltz of Brookfield, president of SEWTU. "We're proud of the work we've been doing, but this type of award is really humbling."

TU is an international cold-water conservation organization based in Arlington, Va. It has about 150,000 members in 400 chapters. The Gold Trout Award recognizes the chapter that has achieved the highest level of conservation work.

Just one other Wisconsin chapter - the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter in Fennimore - has been so honored.

If you've ever fished for trout in Genesee Creek, Paradise Springs, Rosenow Creek or Scuppernong Creek, all within an hour of downtown Milwaukee, you should tip your hat to SEWTU.

The group has done significant work on all those waters in the last decade, including holding dozens of "work parties" to clear brush and do in-stream work. It also has conducted children's fishing clinics, fly-tying classes, a fly-fishing program to benefit military veterans and doubled its membership (to 617) in the last decade.

Its work isn't only focused on southeastern Wisconsin. The group raised \$65,000 for the restoration of Camp Creek in Richland County and organized the single largest work party in the Trout Unlimited Driftless Area project, according to coordinator Jeff Hastings of Westby. More than 100 LUNKERS (underwater fish habitat structures) were built in a day.

"In my mind, they are the best of the best," said Hastings. "It's great to see them get recognized."

SEWTU will receive the award in front of what is predicted to be a particularly large and nostalgic crowd.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Trout Unlimited, an organization formed in Michigan by anglers concerned about deterioration in their cherished rivers and streams.

About 18 SEWTU members are expected to travel to the convention, including Koltz; Todd Durian, vice president, of Milwaukee; Ivan Novahica, treasurer, of Greenfield; Chris Weber, secretary, of Cedarburg; and Dan Asmus, past president, of Hubertus.

According to TU records, the organization was first envisioned in 1950 by George Mason, chairman of American Motors and secretary of the conservation organization Ducks Unlimited.

Mason proclaimed trout fishing as his first love and thought a group similar to DU but focused on cold-water resources could do much good.

Though Mason died in 1954, his vision of an organization to "perpetuate wild trout in streams for all anglers and for future generations" became a reality in 1959.

George Griffith, a one-time member of the Michigan Conservation Commission and fellow advocate of the idea, became the group's first chairman. Other early supporters included Fred Bear, founder of Bear Archery, and Lon B. Adams, originator of the popular Adams fly pattern.

The organization was formally founded Sept. 5, 1959, as Trout, Unlimited. The comma was eventually dropped.

Within a month it passed a resolution calling on Michigan to complete a full inventory of its trout waters and their ability to sustain wild trout. Shortly thereafter it assembled a board of five prominent biologists from across the country to provide counsel on strategies for fisheries management and projects.

Chapters began to spread in the early 1960s, including in Wisconsin.

Though TU garnered a reputation in some corners as an elitist, fly-fishing organization, SEWTU has worked to shed the image, making a conscious effort to reach out to all anglers and others interested in conservation.

The group holds monthly meetings that are free and open to the public. At a recent casting clinic at Greenfield Park, it made a point of inviting spin anglers.

"Our mission statement doesn't even mention fishing," said Koltz. "It's really about improving the resource rather than what's on the terminal end of your tackle."

It is likely true that the majority of SEWTU members spend more time each year working on streams than fishing in them.

"People ask me how the fishing is on some of these streams and I tell them I don't know," said Asmus.

The group's work days are routinely attended by more than 40 members.

"If the (DNR) asks us to help with a project, they now know we're bringing an army," said Asmus.

According to Doug Welch, senior fisheries biologist for the Department of Natural Resources, the chapter's work since the mid-1990s to improve Bluff and Whitewater creeks in Walworth County has contributed to a 500-fold increase in brown trout.

The 2009 national convention will take place near the banks of the Au Sable River, where TU was founded 50 years ago.

It's impossible to say whether TU founders envisioned a day when members from an urban area with scant trout water would be the organization's top achievers. But you'd have to think they'd be pleased that Friday a group with arguably more heart than trout will be in the spotlight.

"SEWTU deserves to be the chapter of the year because it is a chapter without walls," said James Bailey, a member of the Gary Borger TU chapter in Illinois. "They are willing to work with anyone who wants to improve the streams and habitat we all love."

---

## ARCHIVES

---

[Hunters, Packers are joining forces to tackle hunger](#)

[Like old times](#)

[The 'turdy' truth](#)

[A deer-blind ambition](#)

[Legacy of hunting, fishing celebrated](#)

[Natural approach](#)

[Managing predators complex](#)

[Time to take another shot](#)

[Fishing for compassion](#)

[The fields of dreams](#)

[Project RED helps detect invasive species](#)

[There's no place like home](#)

[Sharpening their aim](#)

[State meetings offer wealth of information](#)

[Pristine pond has gems](#)

[Trio of deer issues to take flight](#)

[Kolodzinski making his day count](#)

[Freeing DNR of political pollution](#)

[Students reaching for the sky](#)

[Association born and baptized in water](#)