

TROUT UNLIMITED OF SOUTHWESTERN VERMONT
July 25th, 2006 Chapter Meeting MINUTES

Attendees

Officers

Eric Rickstad	President
Doug Lyons	Vice President
Frank Nelson	Treasurer
Peter Bellamy	Secretary

Chapter Members

Bill Bullock
Joe Phillips
Ed Vallerie
Martha Heilemann
Nanette Roina
Rob Waite & Diane Welebit
Kim Kolakowski

Guests/non-members

Joe Overlock (Berkshire county Fly Fishers)
Jim Henderson

Minutes

President Rickstad reviewed the VT Fish & Wildlife Proposed Battenkill Trout Fishery Management Plan. Attention was focused on the included stocking of triploid rainbow trout as part of the state's proposed plan. This was meant as a general review to date, of 'where do we stand so far, and where do we go from here?'

Summarized the articles and editorials submitted and published to date in various local and regional papers (Bennington banner, Rutland Herald, Burlington Free Press) as well as other periodicals (specifically President Rickstad's response to Commissioner Laroche, which both appeared in Vermont Outdoors – see our web site for copies of and/or links to these and all articles published to date on this issue). Also discussed were the various petitions and signatures we've gathered so far showing support for real long-term river restoration without stocking of the BK.

It was emphasized was the fact that we need to educate the public as to what it is we are in support of and why. With the goal of winning public support for those in the middle, who are on-the-fence on this matter and haven't yet formed an opinion. It was echoed that we won't be able to sway those of the hard-core pro-stocking contingent, so our best efforts will be focused on gathering support by educating those in the middle.

This was generally agreed to and it was noted that we need to publish an 'open letter' to the community in the local press, presenting our position, addressing what it is we believe on this issue, and why, without getting antagonistic, or pointing-fingers. Meant simply and most importantly as a way to educate those in the middle, without a strong opinion on the matter. Noted as important was the fact that emphasis should be placed on the fact that we want the same thing in the long term as those who are pro-stocking: that we want a healthy Battenkill that supports a healthy population of trout that could sustain a limited and reasonable harvest of trout without causing the fishery to collapse.

Vice President Doug Lyons, presented a resolution that was voted on and unanimously approved, after being amended at Frank Nelson's suggestion to include "according to the best available scientific research". This resolution was adopted as the official stance and position of the Southwestern Vermont

Chapter of Trout Unlimited on this issue of the State of Vermont's proposed Fishery Management Plan for the Battenkill.

The resolution that was approved is as follows:

“We, the Southwestern Vermont Chapter of Trout Unlimited, stand opposed to the stocking of any and all trout, fertile, triploid or otherwise, of any and all species, brown, rainbow, or brook, and instead stand by and fully support real long-term river restoration, and maintain that the mainstem of the Battenkill should continue to be managed, maintained and administered as a wild trout stream. This position is based upon the best current scientific research available. We believe that if managed as a wild trout stream and given the opportunity for real long term river restoration to take effect, the Battenkill will continue to respond positively and the population of wild brown and brook trout will continue to rebound as it has for the past thirty years. Our ultimate long term goal is no different than that of any other party: we hope for the time when the Battenkill will again in the future support sufficient numbers of wildly reproducing trout such that a limited and reasonable harvest can be supported.”

As noted above, this resolution was put to a vote, and was unanimously accepted by all TU chapter members (#049) present, plus two votes submitted by proxy (J.Mirenda & H.Serrell) as the official position of the Southwestern Vermont Chapter of trout Unlimited.

Other items discussed as ‘to do’ prior to the open/public meetings in the fall:

- We need 4-6 talking points which would summarize and simplify our position in such a way that any chapter member could use them to sit down with a third party and explain the overall issue and our position on it. This will be especially helpful if we can distribute this to all members, and ask that they share the information with any and all possible.
- Previously mentioned above, we need to publish an open letter to the community explaining our position and why we believe it is the right thing to do for the community, the river, and all – since we in effect desire the same long-term result – enough trout in the river to support a reasonable harvest.
- We will also investigate getting a bulletin board/s available on the TUSWVT.org website.
- It was also agreed that Frank Nelson should pursue securing a copy of the Robert Bachman video from his study of brown trout on Spruce Creek, in PA. Is Frank is successful in securing this video, it could prove very useful in terms of helping to educate not just our chapter members, but could also be used as an educational tool for the public and possibly as ‘evidence’ which could be relied upon during the open meetings in the fall of 2006.

Meeting adjourned.

Notes taken by Peter Bellamy.
7/25/2006