

DUNBAR CREEK RESTORATION-SPRING 2018

DALE KOTOWSKI



Photo by Scott Hoffman
PAFBC personnel contemplates enhancement on Dunbar Creek

In August of 2014, a severe local rainstorm produced tremendous flooding on the Dunbar Creek watershed. In the main stem of Dunbar, a number of the old wooden structures known as “jackdams” were completely destroyed. These structures date back to the Civilian Conservation Corps and the WPA work projects of the depression era. Over the years they have been damaged and repaired many times. Finally, nature prevailed and some stretches of the stream were scoured down to the bedrock. The wooden remains of the dams are now nothing more than a hazard.

The pros & cons of the jackdams and the pools created by them can be debated. However, the ability of these dams to block the upstream movement of aquatic organisms including trout cannot be denied. Since the destruction of the dams, connectivity has been restored. Brook trout are now able to utilize upstream and downstream habitat. Over the last several years, native brook trout populations have increased. Where once we only found PA native trout in the upstream tributaries of Dunbar, we now see significant populations throughout the mainstem. Electroshock surveys completed in 2016 found the presence of 3-4 year classes of brook trout.

In February, CRTU received a grant from the PA Council of Trout Unlimited’s “Forever Wild” program. This grant is “awarded to chapters to assist in the completion of projects and programs that directly relate to the restoration of PA’s native trout”. We thank the PA Council for all of their help over the years and look forward to working with them in the future.

The appeal of the project enabled the chapter to be awarded a Dominion Energy Watershed Grant. This program is administered by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy “in commitment to its core mission of conserving PA’s diverse ecosystems through science-based strategy, leadership and collaboration. We thank the Conservancy and Dominion Energy!

Financial support for this grant program is provided by the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation which is “dedicated to the economic, physical and social health of the communities served by Dominion Energy Companies”.

The restoration of Dunbar Creek will begin this spring and the grants listed above will kick start the project. The success of this project will be made possible thru partnerships with the PA Fish & Boat Commission, the PA Game Commission, the Conservancy, the Fayette County Conservation District and the Dunbar Township Supervisors.

The time has come to restore this stream to its natural course. The jackdams will be replaced with a combination of Root Wad Deflectors, Log Framed Stone Deflectors and Log Framed Cross Vanes. These structures will aid in the natural deposition of stone and gravel rubble. In addition, large woody debris will be used in key locations to help stabilize banks, increase cover and diversify habitat.

Overall habitat connectivity will be improved. The deposition of gravel will facilitate spawning habitat. Water depth will be increased in certain areas and new pools will be developed that are more resistant to refilling with sediment.

This project will also include treatment to aid the Easter Hemlock to resist disease and death caused by the wooly adelgid and tree planting to supplement the hemlocks and provide a more diverse stream canopy.

The fishing in Dunbar Creek will most definitely improve! We look forward to working with community leaders to see the completion of a comprehensive restoration of Dunbar Creek. The ensuing benefits to the Fayette County community are enumerable.

CRTU IS COMING TO WASHINGTON!

DALE KOTOWSKI



Thanks to the support of the Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency (WCTPA), Chestnut Ridge Chapter will benefit from the only viewing in the area of the International Fly Fishing Film Festival!

In lieu of our traditional chapter meeting in Washington, PA, everyone is invited to join us at the Washington Elks on Friday, April 13th. Doors open at 5:30pm and the show starts at 6:00pm. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased online at www.washcofilmfest.com.

The night will consist of short and feature length films produced by professional filmmakers from all over the world that showcase the passion, lifestyle & culture of fly fishing. Sponsors include Field & Stream, Echo, Airflo, Hyde Boats and others.

The festival was made possible by the hard work and talent of Chase McClain, Director of Sport & Recreation Marketing for the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, a partner of WCTPA.

Don't miss this one!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

the functional role of wood in the stream.

Phil Thomas of Trout Unlimited spoke on "Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP); The Next Step in Watershed Restoration". AOP is defined as the ability of aquatic or semi-aquatic organisms to utilize upstream and downstream habitat through or beneath human infrastructure such as culverts, bridges, diversions and dams.

From the jackdams of Dunbar Creek to the poorly placed culverts on the headwaters of Big Sandy Creek, our area is full of barriers to organism passage. Restoration efforts to eliminate these barriers will greatly enhance brook trout populations.

The conference concluded with the presentation of coldwater conservation grants. CRTU was proud to accept the inaugural Forever Wild Mini Grant, one of only four chapters to receive this award for 2018.

On a lighter note, I invite all of you to the International Fly Fishing Film Festival!

The film will be shown on Friday, April 13, 2018 at the Elks Club in Washington, PA. Thanks to the support of the Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency, all proceeds go to CRTU and will be used for our continuing conservation efforts in the Laurel Highlands.

See you at the movies!

CRTU'S COMMITMENT UPHOLD; ALMOST TWO DECADES OF TRASH CLEANUP ON DUNBAR CREEK

BEN MOYER

One of the Chestnut Ridge TU Chapter's longest-running projects is the annual litter cleanup along Dunbar Creek. The chapter is a participating partner in PennDot's Adopt A Highway program, responsible for litter cleanup along the Dunbar-Ohiopyle Road from the downstream limit of the Fly-Fishing-Only section, upstream to the Betty Knox Road. From there, CRTU volunteers extend the cleanup along Dunbar Creek and the Betty Knox Road into State Game Land 51 to the last upstream parking lot.

The litter cleanup event always happens on the Saturday preceding the opening of trout season so that anglers can better enjoy Dunbar Creek's natural setting, free of trash and debris.

"A lot of our members have always picked up trash along Dunbar while fishing," said Eugene Gordon who chairs the cleanup effort for CRTU. "But we started it as a formal annual project in April 1996."

While Gordon says it's regrettable that any litter is left behind along such a beautiful resource as Dunbar Creek, he believes the litter situation along the stream has gradually improved over the years.

"The first time we did it we took out three triaxles of trash and over 100 tires. I don't think you could imagine much of anything that we haven't found along the stream—appliances, furniture, toilets, car parts and even an entire car once by the pipeline. There are no surprises among those members who have participated."

But in recent years, the volume of trash has gradually diminished. What once took a day-and-a-half to clean up now can generally be accomplished by CRTU volunteers in two or three hours of work.

"We like to hope that people are beginning to wake up to what we have here and are respecting it a little more," Gordon reflected.

The cleanup is much appreciated by Game Commission staff who patrol and maintain the game lands.

"The Betty Knox section along Dunbar Creek historically has been a targeted location for illegal dumping and random littering," said Steve Leindecker, Game Commission land manager for Fayette, Greene and Somerset counties. "Our Habitat Maintenance Crew is tasked with cleaning up trash, litter and illegal dumps, especially tires which are difficult to properly dispose of, and the crew really appreciates the assistance with keeping this part of SGL 51 clean. Chestnut Ridge Trout Unlimited's cleanup project just before the trout season opener every year has been going on long before I became land manager, and it has always been appreciated by our agency and the local outdoor community. Dunbar Creek is a popular resource with local hunters and fishermen and without the annual cleanup, those who value this scenic area would have a less enjoyable experience there."

Several organizations have partnered with CRTU on the cleanup over the years including; Pennsylvania Game Commission, Dunbar Sportsmen's Club, PA Cleanways, PennDot, and Dunbar Township.

"Our chapter can be proud that we have worked to improve both the water quality of Dunbar Creek through our Glade Run project, and the scenic character of the stream corridor by cleaning up litter. This stream is a place that deserves our best efforts," Gordon said.

This year's Dunbar Creek litter cleanup begins at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 7 at the former Game Commission maintenance building where the Betty Knox Road begins to follow Dunbar Creek upstream. All chapter members are encouraged to participate.



Photo by Ben Moyer

CRTU members Ernie Walker (left) and Paul Gulya, with trash, tires and litter collected along Dunbar Creek in a recent cleanup.

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We're on the web at
www.ChestnutridgeTU.org

Trout Unlimited's mission is to conserve, protect and restore North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds. Trout Unlimited's Chestnut Ridge Chapter has been a leader in coldwater conservation in southwestern Pennsylvania since 1995. With its efforts focused on the watershed of the Youghiogheny River, Chestnut Ridge TU works for cleaner streams, public awareness of water quality issues, and high quality trout fishing for the region's residents and visitors.



Tale of the Pool
Official Newsletter of CRTU

SEASONS ON THE YOUGH-SPRING DALE KOTOWSKI

Spring (if it ever comes!) is a wondrously complex season on the Youghiogheny. Hatches abound and thoughts of rising trout coupled with months of cabin fever fuel our fishing enthusiasm. Let's take a look at the Yough's prerequisites for a successful spring season.

Early spring offers us a continuation of the winter's patterns. Winter stoneflies will hatch through March. Little black stones size 18-20 and brown/gray stones a size larger will join the Baetis (little blue winged olives) size 20-22 to provide you with the first consistent dry fly fishing of the year. These hatches are usually a late morning or early afternoon affair.

When nothing is hatching, you will wisely spend your time nymphing. I prefer European nymphing in the spring. Two or three nymphs fished deep with a little movement will usually out produce indicator nymphing. "Go to" patterns for this time of the year should include bead head versions of the Prince, pheasant tail and hare's ear in sizes 16-18. Caddis larvae patterns in tan and olive as well as brighter green to match the "rockworm". Try these in sizes 14-16. Suckers spawn as water temperatures reach the 40's. Your favorite sucker spawn patterns should be in your early spring fly box. Try bright colors when the water is off color and go with paler shades as the water clears. Use a heavily weighted nymph such as the Vladi worm to anchor your nymph rig.

The joy of spring fishing is matching the hatches as they occur. Somewhere on the Yough watershed you will find the following in the coming months:

- grannom caddis sz.14-16
- march browns sz.10-14
- blue quill sz. 16-18
- tan and olive caddis sz.14-16
- quill gordon sz.12-14
- sulphurs sz.12-14
- hendricksons sz.14-16
- green and brown drakes sz.8-10
- cahills sz.14-16
- and, of course, ubiquitous midges sz 20-26

And if all of that is not enough...you can fish streamers. Remember in early spring, colder water slows the trout's metabolism. Swing your streamers for best results. As the water warms, you can begin to strip your streamers as the trout begin to chase.

This exceptional fishery did not always exist. As recently as twenty-five years ago, fishing on the Yough was deteriorating. Acid mine spills on the Casselman and elsewhere had markedly affected sport fishing on the Youghiogheny well below Ohioypyle. None of the above was happening. Hatches were virtually nonexistent and fewer and fewer fish were caught. What a difference all of you can make!

Get involved!

Enjoy and be thankful for the clear waters of the Youghiogheny. Good fishing!

LAST CAST

FROM THE EDITOR

Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ChestnutRidgeTU> and on twitter at <https://twitter.com/ChestnutRidgeTU>.

Many thanks to CTRU members Dale Kotowski and Ben Moyer for their contributions to this issue of the newsletter.

Scott Hoffman