



Tennessee Council, Trout Unlimited

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Minutes of meeting held February 1, 2014, at Westminster Presbyterian Church on Northshore Drive in Knoxville.

Chapters present: **Appalachian**, Steve Fry; **Cherokee**, Russ Ambrose, Allen Robbins, Jerry Whitted; **Clinch River**, Steve Brown, Clayton Gist, John Thurman; **Cumberland**, Dick Davis; **Great Smoky Mountains**, George Lane, Rick Murphree; **Overmountain**, Ron Harrington.

Chapters Absent: **Delta, Hiwassee, Little River.**

Also present: Steve Moyer, TU national vice president of governmental affairs, and Damon Hearne, TU Southeast conservation coordinator.

The council meeting was called to order at 1 p.m. by chairman Rick Murphree, who greeted those present and introduced national TU staff and council members present. He then asked for chapter reports.

* Great Smoky Mountains Chapter: Murphree reported that the chapter is struggling, with leadership problems, but a membership meeting is scheduled for Monday, Feb. 3, at Calhoun's in Bearden, with a program on Alaska fishing camps and the Pebble Mine situation. George Lane added that the chapter is cooperating with Little River Chapter on the Troutfest Banquet scheduled for April 25.

* Cumberland Chapter: Dick Davis said the chapter has no report.

* Appalachian Chapter: Steve Fry reported that the chapter is doing better, and had nine program meetings plus a Christmas party last year. The one TIC program has problems, with few surviving fry. As a method of increasing attendance, every member was given one chance for every meeting he attended for a drawing of a custom fly rod, and attendance rose to 12 to 20 members per meeting. There are no fly shops now in Chattanooga, but they meet at the Sportsman's Warehouse. One meeting was held at the Chattanooga Aquarium to see the brook trout project at the fry stage; the fingerlings will be released in Hampton Creek.

* Overmountain Chapter: Ron Harrington said the chapter has been assisting TWRA with stream sampling. The South Holston River cleanup drew 500 volunteers and collected 25 tons of trash, producing 1,600 volunteer hours. There was also a Doe River cleanup. There were six program meetings, with "skill" meetings on alternate months (fly tying, aquatic insect identification, etc.). Skill meetings this year will focus on youth education. This year's projects will include improving Hampton Creek and building a parking lot near the Watauga River with a trail to the stream. The chapter entered a partnership with Thirsty Orange for fundraising at a "craft beer extravaganza" April 12. Thirsty Orange

needs a nonprofit partner to obtain a one-day beer permit. The chapter will receive \$5 for each ticket it sells, and has been guaranteed a minimum of \$1,500.

* Clinch River Chapter: Steve Brown reported that the chapter has grown to 175 members, with 25 to 40 members at program meetings. The chapter held eight program meetings plus two river activity meetings, a swap meet and a Christmas party last year. There have been continuity problems with teachers in TIC programs; consequently there is only one project this year. The chapter has concentrated on Project Healing Waters (fly tying classes, fishing outings and rod building class) and youth programs (Kids Fish Free Day and a Boys and Girls Club fly tying, fly casting and fishing trip). The principal chapter fundraiser is a fly tying class held each January and February which is also a major source of new members. The annual Big Clinch River Cleanup involved community volunteers, with breakfast at the Museum of Appalachia and a total of 78 volunteers; an expanded version is expected in 2014. In addition, the chapter has an Adopt-a-Highway cleanup on a two-mile stretch of Route 441 on the approach to Norris Dam, as well as a mile or more of River Road fronting the Millers Island river access.

* Cherokee Chapter: Jerry Whitted, the new chapter president, reported that the chapter has 10 TIC projects. The chapter participated in the Thunder Valley Fly and Wine show at Bristol Motor Speedway last year and will do so again April 25-27, with Bob Clouser and Bo Beasley featured. There was a room in the speedway dedicated to a TIC project for St. Jude youth cancer patients. Chapter meeting attendance averages 30% of the 90 members. The chapter has a stream cleanup in Greenville twice a year. Projects this year will include daylighting Sawmill Branch with the USFS. Four ponds in the Cherokee National Forest are stocked for Kids Fish Free day—for last year's day, with corporate support from Walmart and Lowe's, about 250 participants registered.

* Little River Chapter: Murphree reported that the chapter has been very involved with the Steve Moore retirement program this evening in Sevierville and with planning the Troutfest Banquet on April 25. There will be a breakfast meeting on the acid deposition testing program on April 22; the program is more than 20 years old.

Davis reported on the license plate conservation fund, which brought in about \$39,000 in 2012 and more than \$35,000 in 2013, with one more payment due which should bring the 2013 total to more than \$40,000. This means there are 2,500-3,000 TU license plates in circulation every year, with the number still growing. All of the grant applications in 2013 were funded at the requested level (compared to many fewer funded at reduced levels by the national TU Embrace-a-Stream program). Fry reported that \$1,500 has been reserved for support of Project Healing Waters programs, but affected chapters need to request the funds (at \$500 per chapter) for conservation/education purposes, since we cannot legally write a check to the national PHW program. Fry announced his readiness to serve on the conservation fund committee for one more year, but said we need to find a replacement next year. Fry said he will send out grant application information soon.

John Thurman reported that the fourth Great Smoky Mountains Trout Adventure Camp is set to go for June 16-21, with new chaperones for both boys and girls. This year will see the first "senior camper," a prior camper who returns to talk to the new campers and assist in the program. Harper Austin, the former camper, will also be able to talk about his experiences at TU youth summits in Pennsylvania and Colorado the last two years. So far five campers are signed up, so we need a minimum of three more. This year will

feature a fishing trip to Norton Creek, where campers will have a much better chance of catching fish than in previous years' outings.

Steve Moyer updated the council on current national lobbying efforts in Congress. TU is very pleased with the new farm bill passed by the House on Jan. 29. Moyer had copies of the TU press release, which notes a number of programs of great interest to fishermen and conservationists in general; there are significant cuts in conservation programs, but minimal effects on programs affecting TU. The Senate is expected to pass the bill next week.

Moyer said the situation is looking hopeful for Pebble Mine. One major financier has pulled out of the project and the sole company still hoping to open the mine is in poor financial shape. The EPA has published its watershed environmental assessment, peer review of the assessment is positive and the assessment is negative for the mine operators (an executive summary is on the TU website); and U.S. Senator Begich of Alaska has announced his opposition to the mine.

In addition, the FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriations Bill largely holds the line on most conservation issues and will keep all mitigation hatcheries in operation at the same level for the next year.

Allen Robbins, who serves on the TVA mitigation hatchery committee, said TVA wants the hatcheries maintained, but doesn't want to be held responsible for them. The consensus is that TVA will have to pay up, but the problem is that the various state Fish and Wildlife agencies do not know the actual costs. Alternative possible solutions include increases in license and trout stamp prices.

Damon Hearne reported that the national TU website has been revamped in a major way, which makes interaction and use of social interaction programs very easy. The new website can also host chapter websites.

Hearne said his job description has evolved from land protection coordination to a more general conservation coordination position. He reported that the Rocky Fork project is a success story, with the last piece of property in the National Forest and a new Tennessee state park coming soon to the lower area; all the land acquisition has been paid for. He hopes that interested TU chapters will help plan the new state park. In additional land protection, 500 acres were acquired by the State of North Carolina at Grassy Ridge, and 1,000 acres of blue ribbon headwaters in Johnson County, Tenn., at Cut Laurel Gap (now part of Cherokee National Forest) and 500 acres in North Carolina have been protected. Now he will be concentrating on the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which since 1964 has been funded from the income of offshore petroleum leases. Unfortunately, Congress has frequently usurped these funds to supplement general revenue. Hearne will be working on aquatic organism passage work on protected properties (culvert removal for brook trout passage and reconnection). He will focus on Southern Appalachian Brook Trout and climate change issues. Current projects are principally in North Carolina, but he is looking for projects in Tennessee and asks that the chapters help identify suitable places. Grant money is available to match money TU chapters can raise. On a motion by George Lane seconded by John Thurman, the sense of the council is that the conservation committee should view favorably any grant requests supporting this program.

Murphree announced that he has been in contact with the Arkansas Council in an attempt to better serve the needs of West Tennessee TU members. One possibility is allowing Memphis-area members to join a new West Memphis/Arkansas chapter, which would give them a viable chapter with support for the home waters they normally fish in Arkansas. Rick will talk to the Arkansas Council and report at the next Tennessee Council meeting.

Allen Robbins says the Cherokee chapter has 10 TIC projects, but is looking for help with a project in Robertson County. He wondered if the council could provide funds for the Friends of the Hatchery to buy chillers for projects they would institute. The consensus of the council is that Lori Paris has the discretion to buy the chillers and could enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with Friends of the Hatchery whereby TU could loan the chillers but retain ownership.

Fry said that Travis Scott is now the head of Pheasant Fields, and the brook trout hatchery has had good egg production. Volunteers at the Tellico River cleanup on March 8 will be given the opportunity to tour the brook trout hatchery facility.

The Southeast Regional Meeting will take place March 28-30 at Dillard, Ga. (details on TU website). On a motion by Lane, seconded by Fry, the council allocated \$300 per chapter to underwrite sending chapter leaders or prospective leaders to the meeting. On a motion by Lane, seconded by Jerry Whitted, the council will contribute \$250 to the Saturday evening entertainment.

Lane noted that the council has excess funds in the treasury, and suggested that anything over a certain reserve amount really should be used. Possibilities include giving money to the chapters or funding one or more scholarships. Chapters were asked to consider possible uses for such excess funds, and the executive committee was asked to project how much excess might be available in coming years.

The minutes of the July 27 council meeting were unanimously approved.

Allen Robbins brought up the fact that no Coldwater Meeting has been scheduled, and several members stated their unhappiness with the lack of discussion with TVA at this and the last council meetings. Murphree stated that the meeting had not been scheduled because he had not heard from TVA, and he thought they were not interested. Brown and Fry said that the Coldwater meeting has been a joint venture between TU and TVA, and one of the most important council activities for 15 or more years; Lane said the council needs a minimum of one meeting with our most important governmental partners. Fry said we need to talk to TVA about future plans for the Coldwater meeting. One possibility mentioned was to move from January (with weather problems) and July (with too much going on and many people away on summer vacation) to spring and fall, before and after work becomes too busy. Steve Brown will talk to Dennis Baxter, and Robbins will talk to Terry Cheek (in TVA environmental work) about future meeting ideas.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12.