

A LOCAL CHAPTER OF
 AMERICA'S LEADING NONPROFIT
 COLDWATER FISHERIES
 CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

THE MERSHON
MUDDLER

◆ *Newsletter of the William B. Mershon Chapter of Trout Unlimited* ◆

1989, 1996 & 1997 RECIPIENT OF THE MICHIGAN COUNCIL TU CHAPTER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Meanders
 A few thoughts from
 the president



Robb Smith, chapter president

It seems that just a few years ago I was digging post holes and pounding 10" spikes into a cedar log fence being erected to protect the eroding banks of an access site on the South Branch of the Au Sable River. This would be the first of many projects associated with the Mershon chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU) and the "protection and preservation of our cold-water resources." Back then I'm not sure I had ever heard that phrase, but I knew we had completed a project for the improvement of the river system and the sport. During my first weekend outing, we stayed at the Trahpa Lodge on the holy waters of the Au Sable River. I met Howard Johnson, David Fisher, Dan Keane, Mark Neumeyer, Walt Averill, Bo Brines and many other leaders and members of the Mershon chapter. These men were organized, dedicated, and passionate about the mission of TU. I knew I had to become more involved with this team. At future projects and at board meetings, I would meet and observe the commitment and wisdom of Harold Kleinert, Art Neumann, and other advisors and board members regarding the resource. The "hook" was set, and I have continued to be active with the Mershon chapter in several different capacities and projects.

This year I have the honor and responsibility to be president of the Mershon chapter. With the help of past president Chris Radke, an active

*See **Meanders** page 11*

Calendar of Events

AUSABLE RIVER CLEAN-UP
Saturday, September 10, 2005
 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Mio meeting location to be determined.



RIFLE RIVER WORK PROJECT
 PLACING LUNKER STRUCTURES
Saturday, September 24, 2005
 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

(See Muddler page 2 for details).

PLANTING CEDAR TREES ON THE
 MASON TRACT OF THE AUSABLE
 RIVER

Saturday, October 8, 2005
 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Grayling

(See Muddler page 2 for details).

MERSHON BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, September 7, 2005
Wednesday, October 5, 2005
Wednesday, November 2, 2005
 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Garber Buick dealership

Rifle River project set for September 24th

by Mike Meyer
Rifle River coordinator

This year's project is scheduled for September 24th. We will be installing 250 feet of tree revetment and 32 feet of luncker structure on the main stream in the Cabin Lake area. Due to the magnitude of this project, it will be a joint effort with the Ann Arbor chapter of Trout Unlimited.

We will meet at the roadside park at the corner of M33 and Cabin Lake Road at 8:30a.m. (SHARP) and proceed to the site from there.

You will need your waders, gloves, hat, and bug spray. Optional items that are handy include rakes, shovels, hand tools, and a lawn chair (to be used at lunch time only!).

This is a significant project to complete in one day, and **we will need a large crew**. Please mark your calendar for September 24th and contact Mike Meyer via email at mikemeyertu@charter.net or by phone at 989-892-9624. ♦

Au Sable River project planned for October

If you have a green thumb, or better yet, you don't mind getting your hands a little dirty, your help is needed to plant and protect northern white-cedar seedlings within the Mason Tract on the South Branch of the Au Sable River.

The William B. Mershon chapter has committed to plant fifty cedar seedlings along the river as part of the "Cedars for the Au Sable" project. Fifteen chapter volunteers are needed to make this work project a success. It will take about four hours to plant the cedar seedlings; so that may leave a few hours for fishing in the afternoon.

This is a great outing for your son or daughter to join you.

The work project is Saturday, October 8, 2005. We will meet at Chase Bridge (5 miles northeast of Roscommon) on the South Branch of the Au Sable River at 9:00 a.m. A streamside lunch will be provided.

Please call chapter president Robb Smith by September 30th (989-893-4541) to sign up for the work project. ♦

Rifle River restoration wrap-up

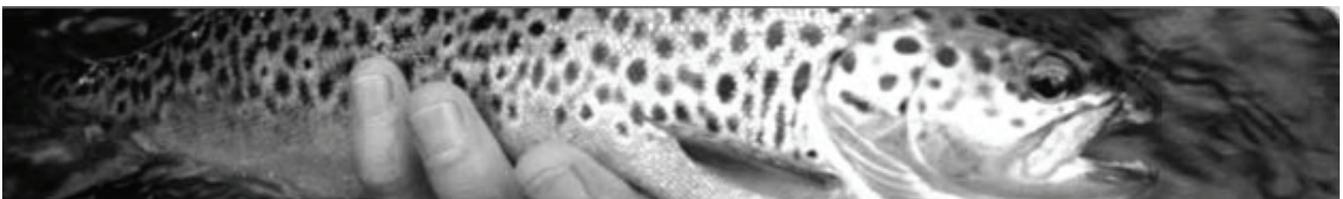
Say that ten times fast!
By Mike Meyer,

The 2004 Rifle River project, which was not completed in 2004 due to high water levels, was completed on June 10th, 2005.

A fine crew of twelve dedicated TU'ers assembled at the roadside park on the corner of M33 and Cabin Lake Road. We caravanned to the work site from there. Two eight-foot luncker structures were placed, covered with a ton or so of rock and topsoil, and seeded. Jim Hergott, the project coordinator for the Saginaw Bay R.C.&D, tells me the site is looking good.

The chapter would like to extend much appreciation and thanks to all of the volunteers for their hard work and dedication to improving our natural resources. If you would like to see some good old "Yankee ingenuity" at work, please come and join with us. These are great projects to meet fellow trout fisherman and swap a few stories while enjoying a great day.

I would also like to extend a special thank you to Jim Comment for preparing a tasty lunch for all. ♦



At the recent Mershon banquet, it was obvious that many of the members could trip over me in the street, not know who I am, and just walk away. Allow me to introduce myself. I was born in Cook County, Illinois, in October of 1940. When my family moved to northern California in 1946, the police caught up with them and made them take me, too. My next 17 years were spent in public schools in San Bruno. In 1963, having graduated with a B.S. in chemistry from (then) San Francisco State College and having taken my first—and so far only—wife, Sandra, I moved my newly-formed family to Pullman, Washington. Pullman blessed us with a daughter, Alicia Galatea, and WSU granted me a Doctorate in Inorganic Chemistry. On we went to Gainesville, Florida, for postdoctoral work, and another daughter, Sabrina Juliette.

The lure of Flint was strong back in 1968, so when Flint College of the University of Michigan offered me a job teaching chemistry, I eagerly took it. Assistant-, then Associate-, and finally Full-Professorships -(of what, I'm not saying) ensued. Throw in a couple of summers doing research back in Gainesville, the occasional sabbatical (Austin, Gainesville, Midland, and—shudder!—East Lansing), and trips here and there, to round out the last thirty-five years. I'm now retired, emeritus (Latin for 'way out of merit'). Oh, and I'd better mention that I have a granddaughter (9) and grandson (4).

I first tried fly fishing at age fifteen, using a slightly-broken bamboo rod on the John Day River in Oregon, and had a hellacious strike from a kamikaze trout that ran through every bit of my line and then broke off. She was hooked, and so was I. After that, the pursuit of trout led to my falling down in Hat Creek, the Pit and McCloud and Upper Sacramento Rivers, the Pack and Priest and Snake and Madison and Gallatin, and many more—some are colder than others, but they're all just as wet.

Understandably, career and family increasingly took my time, and I didn't get back to the sport seriously until about twelve years ago, when my wife (Remember her? She was a schoolmarm by then.) introduced me to her school's janitor, and through him to the Greater Flint Muddler Minnows. I joined FFF and TU that very month. TU National humorously assigned me to a defunct chapter, then to the Mason/Griffith/Founders' chapter, but when it came to work projects on the Rifle River, the Mershon chapter got my attention and my support. So here I am. I certainly have concerns, like getting more trout fisherman (not necessarily fly-fishers) to participate in TU and actively promote the resource, increasing public access to Michigan waters, furthering the designation of more Blue Ribbon waters, and supporting clean air and clean water legislation.

Now you can trip over me and just walk away because you DO know who I am! ♦

Profile

Bob Kren,

Sulfide Mining Background

by Rich Bowman

MCTU Resolution

Mining in Reactive Ore Bodies:

The Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited opposes the permitting of surface or underground mining in Sulfide and other reactive ore bodies until current statutes and regulations are reviewed and updated to adequately protect cold-water fisheries from potential damage from uncontrolled or improperly managed acid mine drainage.

On September 25, 2003, the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited (MCTU) at its regular quarterly meeting, received a presentation from Cynthia Prior, Executive Director of the Yellow Dog Watershed Council about potential mining of sulfide (reactive) ore in the watersheds of the Yellow Dog and/or Salmon Trout Rivers. Following that presentation and discussion, MCTU unanimously adopted the resolution reprinted in the sidebar.

Subsequent to the passage of this resolution, MCTU's Executive Director met with senior staff of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and legislators from the Upper Peninsula and requested that a work group be appointed to review existing statute, and where necessary, draft proposed new language to regulate mining in reactive ore bodies. In late 2003 the members of the Michigan Legislature representing the Upper Peninsula sent a letter to the governor requesting that a work group be appointed and tasked to recommend a new statute. That work group, of which MCTU was a member, completed its work in the fall of 2004, and the proposed language was adopted by the Michigan Legislature and signed by the Governor to become part 632 of the Michigan Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act 451 of 1994.

After passage of this act, another work group was appointed by MDEQ to draft recommended administrative rules to

implement the provisions of part 632. This work group, of which MCTU was also a member, met from January until May of 2005 and drafted a proposed set of rules. These rules are currently under review, and public hearings on them will be held during late summer and early fall of this year.

There are currently two sites in the Upper Peninsula where reactive ore bodies have been delineated and private entities are conducting studies to determine the feasibility of mining—one in Marquette County, and one in Menominee County. In both cases, local citizen activist groups have organized to oppose these potential projects. In addition, at least five other private companies are drilling mineral test wells (under permit from MDEQ) seeking to delineate and evaluate additional ore bodies which would likely contain reactive ores.

With the passage of part 632, (which is available for review at <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/mileg.asp?page=getObject&objName=mc1-451-1994-III-3-4-631-632>) no one can legally mine reactive ore until they have obtained a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. As with all extractive activities, MCTU will not take a position opposing the activity until such time as a permit application is made, so an evaluation can be made of a legally binding proposal. ♦

First off, with regard to the question of sulfide mining in Michigan, the following **do not** yet apply: the sky is falling; the end is near; it is time to press the panic button!

That said, the issue is far from being resolved. Some people may have thought so with the passing of the Michigan Metallic Sulfide Mining Law last December. Make no mistake; this was a major accomplishment and a definite win for conservationists. The statutory framework is rigorous and on point. This is due to the painstaking work of several conservation groups, including the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited (MCTU), led by Rich Bowman. I have been at odds in the past with MCTU on several issues, but in this case, we are largely in concert.

Ah, but the Devil is in the details, which in this case involves the rules for enforcing this excellent statute. Our friend with the horns, triangle tail, and pitchfork often finds a comfy home imbedded between the lines of enforcement protocol. As the rules promulgation for sulfide mining law drags on, he's shopping for furniture.

The same stakeholders who fashioned the law have been hard at work on the regulations to enforce it since January. That means some long days in St. Ignace, the site of the meetings, during the dead of winter. I attended--as an observer--a couple of these conferences, and watching grass grow is

exponentially more exciting. The word tedious cannot adequately describe these sessions. One morning in just over two hours of give and take, they managed to agree on ten sentences of one section of the rules. There are thousands of sentences to review and it seems as if each one is a world unto itself, full of wonder and a diversity of meaning. I couldn't wait for lunch and always found ample reason to sneak back to Luzerne before the afternoon ordeal--'er, I mean--session.

Those who know tell me that this is typical of such functions. Shaping enforcement language to comport with statutory mandate is a thankless chore. The stakeholders are on their 7th draft; perhaps this will be the lucky one. So far there has been solid progress on language for components regarding perpetual care of the mining site, leaching prevention, and the requirement of an Environmental Impact Study. Work continues on forging enforcement language for such aspects as siting requirements, socioeconomic analysis, financial assurance, bonding, reclamation, and monitoring ground and surface water. Some of the disagreements involve a word or two being omitted or a clearer definition of a term. Others are more complicated. It all matters in the end, if we want to keep the statute from being toothless.

The process has been somewhat impaired by inconsistent

see *Mining*, continued on page 6

Vigilance Is Needed In Order To Set The Bar High for Sulfide Mining

by Thomas Buhr

Thomas Buhr is a Life Member of Trout Unlimited. He can be reached at tombuhr@prodigy.net.

Mining, continued from page 5

leadership by the Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). They will ultimately be responsible to enforce these rules. The tenor of MDEQ at meetings has been shaped by the individuals representing the Department. Some seem more conservation friendly while others lean toward a more permissive view of regulation. This can be very confusing for the stakeholders.

Make no mistake about it; the rules promulgation is crucial. If sulfide mining is going to occur in Michigan, then the standards must be set at unprecedented levels for environmental safety. Much has already been written about the threat of sulfide mining to the beautiful Yellow Dog Plains--called the Midwest's last frontier-- and the Salmon-Trout River. It has been well documented what could happen to the population of rare coaster brook trout residing in the Salmon-Trout. Most all of us know about the deleterious effects of Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) where sulfide ores combine with air and water to create sulfuric acid, which, while harmful in its own right, leaches heavy metals like mercury, lead, and arsenic into the water system. The history of Kennecott Minerals Corporation (KMC) as well as its proposed Eagle Project is all part of the public record. What may still not be common knowledge is that sulfide mining has *never* been

done without harming the environment, often devastatingly so. Furthermore, its economic promise as a producer of jobs and tax revenue is, at best, qualified and, at worst, specious.

Research by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) indicates that 40% of watersheds in the western United States are contaminated by mines, most involving AMD. Some of these polluting sites are over 100 years old. This is shocking, but expected. A study by the Center for Streamside Studies at the University of Washington reported that AMD is still seeping from mines built in Europe by the Romans over 1500 years ago. A proposed gold mine project in Nevada has the potential to produce AMD for the next 10,000 years. If AMD occurs on the Yellow Dog Plains, and history says it will, the damage will be around for a long, *long* time.

What happens when AMD gets into the water? Quite simply, death at a system-wide scale. All life, from microbes to invertebrates to fish and waterfowl, either die outright or flee the area. New Mexico's Red River and Colorado's Upper Arkansas have both lost extensive tracts of legendary trout water laid completely bare of fish, all due to AMD. In Michigan, AMD has polluted and damaged the Iron and Brule Rivers, the former since 1973.

Even KMC's Flambeau mine in Wisconsin, a project they claimed showed the process could work, produced pollution

through punctures in waste liners, elevated copper levels in a stream and wetland, and had a wash-out of a section of a dike storing waste water. Fortunately, the Flambeau River has been large enough to dilute the pollution so far, but monitoring will continue for at least the next 40 years. Problems at the Flambeau and other sulfide mines led Wisconsin citizens to pass a statewide restriction on it until: (1) a sulfide mine has operated in North America for 10 years without creating AMD or heavy metal contamination, and, (2) a sulfide mine in North America has been closed 10 years without creating AMD or heavy metal contamination. The Wisconsin Law is probably the reason KMC has come knocking on the door of the Yellow Dog Plains.

Next come the economic questions. Will sulfide mining produce jobs? Will it bring much-needed revenue to a moribund tax base?

The answer to the first question is firmly entrenched in the boom-and-bust nature of the mineral extraction industry. Nickel, the metal of focus in this project, hit a 16-year high this year, but what will be the price when KMC finally sends the takings of the Eagle Project to market? No one knows for sure. Nickel is not rare. There is no shortage of it in this country. Most of the demand is overseas, especially from China. The amount of jobs will be tied to demand for the mineral. KMC says the number could be as high as 140, others sources say it could be as low as 50. Regardless of the final figure, these jobs vanish

when the ore or the demand for it is gone, usually leaving the area worse off than before. The Eagle Project is only expected to last 10 years from beginning to end.

What about the income from the mine? Work by Frendenburg and Wilson, published in a 2002 edition of *Sociological Inquiry*, as well as the Wolf Pack, a grassroots group concerned with sulfide mining, suggest that the Great Lake State is not getting that great of a deal by allowing sulfide mining to occur in its boundaries. About 6% of the net proceeds of the mine will go to the state. This will pay for monitoring the mining operation and addressing its infrastructure needs. Little, if anything, will be left to use for, say, upgrading schools, roads, social services, or even lowering tax bills for Michigan citizens. Considering the potential value of the Eagle Project, *2.8 billion*, our state should receive more tax income, but current tax laws favor the miner. MDEQ has also been vague about how much of this tax revenue will reach the municipalities where the mining will take place.

Some people remain unconcerned about the Eagle

Project for various reasons: it's a stream in the U.P. that no one except a handful of rich guys at the Huron Mountain Club can fish; the coaster is so rare that few ever see one let alone catch one; and it's just one mine. Kennecott's indications that it will pursue more sulfide ore mines in the region have rendered all of these arguments moot. The entire U.P. is now up for grabs because KMC and other mining companies have extensive lease rights throughout the region.

That might just be the beginning. The precious metals that lend themselves to sulfide mining are found along a fissure known as the Mid Continental Rift. The Rift originates in Nebraska running through Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the U.P., down into the *Lower Peninsula to Metropolitan Detroit!* This does not mean any deposits exist below the Big Bridge, but should any be found in abundance, one can rest assured that some mining company will want to extract them. If the need for stringent laws to protect and preserve a beloved piece of Michigan wilderness is not enough to garner active support, then the potential, albeit limited, of AMD in your own morning cup of coffee should do the trick.

So let's review: sulfide mining has never been done safely; it is very harmful to the environment; that harm can last for centuries; the economic upside is short term with a long-term downside; the tax benefit is a push; and sulfide mining could someday come to a river near all of us on this Pleasant Peninsula. To turn a phrase on the state motto: If you seek an answer to how you can help, read on.

First off, stay aware of events. The stakeholders I talked to feel there will be a rules package ready for public comment by the end of September. Because the rules will be lengthy, technical, and not at all clear to everyone who isn't intimate to the process, it will be necessary for most of us to rely on experts, likely the stakeholders themselves, to let us know how well the process went. For most of you, that will be MCTU. This is fine, but be sure to get as much information as possible from other conservation groups, including the Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, and the Michigan Environmental Council. There are disagreements between conservation stakeholders

see ***Mining***, continued on page 8



Mining, *continued from page 7*

regarding certain aspects of the statutes or the language to enforce them. It is important for concerned citizens to get the full perspective on the rules package before deciding what action they would like to take during the public comment period. Check out the various web sites. For general information contact SaveTheWildUP.org.

Once you, as an individual or as a chapter, or both, decide how you want to respond to the proposed rules, go for it. There will be opportunities during the public comment period. In these instances, it is more productive to argue on point rather than just being emotional. MDEQ can be pretty cold hearted, and in a sense they have to be. So, make arguments based on how well the

rules match the intent of the statute. If there are gross inconsistencies between enforcement language and the statute in question, it can be revisited, but MDEQ has to hear it LOUD AND CLEAR.

Finally, let the Governor know how you feel. She can send the package back for reconsideration if she feels it is not up to par. There's an election in 2006. She needs the conservation vote, so the timing is right for her to be receptive.

The whole question of taxes must also be addressed. The statute and rules do not focus on taxation. Additional legislative action may be required, but will be difficult to do in a Republican-controlled state legislature.

After nearly 2000 words, it's time for me to weigh in about this whole issue. I don't think sulfide mining can be done safely, but my ship sailed long ago. There is going to be the chance of sulfide mining in our state. Let's make the laws as restrictive as possible and also find a way to raise the amount of tax income that we, the owners of the lands, receive for this messy, but often highly profitable, venture. I am grateful to the stakeholders for their impressive effort so far and am confident they can construct a set of rules that comport with the statute. They will need our help to see it through. Let's stand by the ready! ♦

WILLIAM B. MERSHON CHAPTER OF TROUT UNLIMITED

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULE

Note: All Board of Directors meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of the month (unless noted) at 5:30 p.m. at Garber Buick, 5925 State Street, Saginaw, Michigan.

No meetings during the summer months.

Wednesday, September 7, 2005

Wednesday, October 5, 2005

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

**We welcome you to attend any of the board meetings.
Your input is an invaluable resource in our efforts to serve the resources we enjoy.**

**WILLIAM B. MERSHON CHAPTER
OF TROUT UNLIMITED
2004-2005**

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Trout Opener

by Josh Butzin

Late September can be a sad time for a trout fisherman. Yes, those of us who hunt do have the fall to look forward to, but there is always a tinge of disappointment that last fall day when you put away the light tackle and dry flies until another spring. If we've been lucky, we have a new chapter of memories full of rises, hatches, stunning sunsets, and summer mornings, and great times with friends and family in beautiful places that we hold dear to our hearts. Soon however, winter sets in and, as any trout fisherman will tell you, so does the anticipation for next year's trout opener.

We start planning trips—which rivers we'll fish in the early season, the tactics we'll use, the flies and leaders we need to stock up on, and the holes that need to be patched in our waders. We wait and wait, and before we know it April is here. We get a warm day or two. Buds start to pop on the trees. Snow gives way to rain, and then one day we find ourselves driving to a river on a Saturday. For me this year was no different, and on Trout Opener 2005, I found myself knee deep in the Holy Waters watching a hatch of

Hendricksons, as a few sporadic trout, who were also ready for the new year, looked up from the cold waters of the Au Sable and saw lunch.

This year on opening day, with the spring drought we've had, the Au Sable's water didn't seem to be as high as in years past, therefore the wading wasn't all that bad. There were hatches of Hendricksons, mixed with some Blue-Wings and a few Mahoganies, predictably each afternoon starting around 3 o'clock and lasting for a couple of hours. Although the majority of the fish were not looking up, there were some fish rising, and it was possible to catch some nice ones on dries. In the mornings and evenings when the temperature was a bit cooler, most guys that I talked to were fishing their favorite streamers and nymphs, and success was decent.

Throughout the day on Saturday I got lucky and caught a few fish, including a sixteen-inch brown near Keystone Landing Campground, and a big one that went unseen and I lost just upstream from Guides Rest during the heat of the Hendrickson hatch. The big fish was feeding just on the edge of a logjam, boiling the water, and taking flies. I figured that he was a monster and got into position to make upstream presentations with a Hendrickson. I must have put 100 casts over the fish first

with a Hennie, then with a Blue-wing. Finally, in desperation, I put on an Adams. The fish hit once, but did not take after several casts. Not knowing what to do next, I tied on a size sixteen Black Caddis, and after about five casts I hooked the fish.

From the moment I set the hook I knew that it was all over. When I set the hook the fish didn't even move and I couldn't make him budge. With a four-weight rod, 6x tippet, and a click pawl drag, I knew that I was done for. Sure enough, the fish turned, headed for the back of the logjam, my drag went—click, click, click—and the 3-pound tippet snapped like fine thread. Comprehending the significance of the fish I had just lost, I must have stood there in the current mumbling to myself for ten minutes. But that's fishing isn't it? That's why we love it. It's unpredictable, and as John Gierach said in his book, *Standing in a River Waving a Stick*, "Down at the core of every fisherman's heart is the belief that on any day something wonderful and unlikely could happen, and that if you're careful and patient it could happen to you." And so it goes.

Sunday, the weather shifted a bit and it became cold and windy. After a quick breakfast at the Grayling Restaurant, I headed up to Deward to fish the upper Manistee. The river was gin clear as usual, and the water was cold—probably still a little too cold that far up for much real action. There



were a few other hearty souls on the stretch, but it seemed that their success was marginal. I had a couple of rises to attractor flies, but the fish were tiny and not very smart, attacking the fly like little ones and hatchery fish do, regardless of the presentation. Without much

luck, I headed back to the Au Sable, but started to get sleeted on and decided to pack it up early and head back home.

Overall I'd say Trout Opener 2005 was a success, and if nothing else, it felt great to just to be on the water, smelling the

cedars and casting a fly. Before you know it, we'll be standing in the dark fishing the Hex hatch and laughing out loud at all the fish being caught. The anticipation continues and my waders are still leaking. ♦

Meanders, continued from page 1

group of officers, advisors, and your board of directors, we hope to continue the traditional high standards and resource involvement of the chapter. As part of this creed, we will be keeping a wary eye on the legislative, political, and private business activities that might affect our cold-water resources. I have learned during my past two years as vice-president that the Michigan Council of TU is highly respected and actively involved at the political level. Some of the most important results that TU achieves are in the political arena, and we will continue to support our state council to this end.

Another exciting development for the Mershon chapter is the launch of our new website, www.tu-mershon.org. Built by board member Pat Zaplitny, the site will include features such as project updates, photos and a comprehensive schedule of events. We encourage you to visit the site at your earliest convenience and offer any suggestions on improvements you would like to see made.

Speaking of upcoming events for the fall, the chapter has already

committed to a high level of activity including:

- The annual Au Sable River clean-up September 10th
- Stream bank restoration project on the Rifle River September 24th
- Cedar's for the Au Sable Project October 8th.

An overview on each of these events can be found in this edition of the *Muddler*, and we strongly encourage you to participate in one or all of these projects.

Additionally, the Mershon chapter and the Anglers of the Au Sable are spearheading an initiative in conjunction with Huron Pines RC&D to repair a very damaged high bank area along the Trophy Waters stretch of the Au Sable River, below Mio. The area known to many of you as "the clay banks," has suffered mightily at the hands of ignorant tubers, wayward canoeists, and Mother Nature. It is our intent to plan an approach for restoration in the fall of 2006. The project will require manpower, fund raising, an effective restoration plan, proper permits, and the coordination of an unnumbered amount of state and federal organizations, as well as volunteers. This is the kind of project that the Mershon chapter can and will successfully

complete with all of your help and support. As the project progresses, we will be sure to keep you updated on all developments.

As you can see, the coming year is wrought with many new challenges to our cold-water resources. I am confident that the Mershon chapter will do its part to keep all of its members aware of the issues and provide various opportunities to work toward the goal of "protecting and preserving our cold-water resources". We are always looking for interested people to join us for restoration projects, fund raising events, or at the board level. Please feel free to contact myself or any board member if you have any interest to do more.

Until next time, I leave you with a quote that sums it up for us all:

"My father was very sure about certain matters pertaining to the universe. To him, all good things—trout as well as eternal salvation—come by grace, and grace comes by art, and art does not come easy."

—Norman Maclean,
A River Runs Through It

Barbless Hooks: another example of acceptance

by Thomas Buhr

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Michigan Streamside Angler.*

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I was beginning to wonder if there were any fish in this river. A solid hour of streamer fishing had produced zilch, nada, not even a half-hearted bump. Well, sometimes fishing seems like a practice session; polishing the cast, trying new patterns, trotting out old reliables. It seemed like one of those times.

WHAM!

My flimsy rod bent into a tight crescent, the tip throbbing from some unseen force. The water boiled at the end of my line. No one had to tell me what had just happened.

FISH!

My senses, dulled from lack of action, came alive in an instant. Keep the line tight, strip it in, hang on! On cue, a chunky brown trout, not quite 20 inches, bolted out of the wrinkled water. Full of brio, the fish danced across the flowing water, frosted white from shallow stones, sweeping its tail along the way as if dusting the riffle, then threw the fly right back in my face.

Barbless hooks. It wasn't the first time, and it wouldn't be the last.

A lost fish is part of the game, but over the years, how many fish had slipped my hook because of a pinched barb? Dozens? Hundreds? Maybe even more.

Sure I would have liked to bring that brown to net, admired his colors, snapped a few photos, felt reassured by subduing a

gamey trout, but I had made a decision long ago and had to accept its downside.

There was a time when the term catch and release was completely unknown. People let fish go, but it was the exception—usually because they were too small or not in season—and not the rule. We kept 'em, that's just the way it was; but things changed.

When I was young, only a prescient few believed that fish populations could ever be exhausted. There were so many of them. Habitat, too—rivers and streams, lakes and ponds—it all seemed endless. Not so anymore.

As I observed these changing times, something crystallized in me. The real joy of fishing was the strike and ensuing fight. I didn't have to keep one. From that (barbless) point on, bluegill to black drum, snook to smallie, I let them all go with very few exceptions. I felt it was my obligation to do so.

Pinching down the barb and going to a single hook—the case in my bait casting/spin fishing days—just made it all that much easier. This was especially true for trout, a fish that gets the vapors if you look at it the wrong way.

What followed was a legion of lost fish. There was even a term for it that I picked up in my Florida days: Palm Beach Release. I learned it from a bass guide—a devoted barb-pincher—while fishing the

wheat fields of the Loxahatchee Conservation Area west of Boca Raton, an area now bordered by timeshares and golf courses.

This could be more than just annoying at times. I'm like every other fisher; there's an ego, the quest for braggin' rights, flashing pictures of the ones that didn't get away. Jabbering about the biggin' that spit my safety pin hook was just another fish tale. Who doesn't have a creel full of those?

And, oh, let me tell you about some of the ones...

Get the (barbless) point?

But it was the right thing to do, preserving the piscatorial population. I tell myself that over and over again.

It was beginning to sound like the rest of my life.

Acceptance, it's everywhere; try running from it. I did for awhile in my callow youth, and it just made things worse.

Oh, oh, another fishing-is-a-metaphor-for-life lesson. I'm no big fan of that stuff either, so I'll make it short. Acceptance is one of the keystones of life. We rarely get our way 100% of the time in anything. Fish populations turned out to be finite, sometimes incredibly so, after all. Habitat shrunk, and irony of ironies, even though some data suggests less people fish today than 30 years ago, it's harder than ever to find a

solitary spot with unmolested finsters. Shrinking numbers of anglers means less political clout. We can barely preserve what we have left.

Now on to life off the water. How much do I have to say about acceptance there? To start with, most of us have to accept that we can't fish, hunt, camp, boat, hike, and, in general, play as much as we'd like to. We have to work, another loadstone of acceptance. This is true regardless of the job type. I have a hybrid career in writing and fishing, both desirable, but like all jobs, come with the daily grind and stress. I'm a slave to the fickle nature of weather and hatches, and must surrender hard-earned favorite spots to customers every day. There's only so many of those, trust me. My fishing time is way down, too. Too often now, at the end of a work day, the last thing I want to do is go fishing. Writing? I'm typing this thing while I'm waiting on customers, trying to make a sensible argument (your call), and watching for typos (Damn!). I made a decision and must accept the downside.

Back to barbless hooks. This is just another example of things we have to do nowadays in our sport. The old days of endless fish stocks and vast, untapped waters went out with the passenger pigeon. Included in the mix are sharing fishing spots, picking up trash, helping with stream improvement, respecting property rights, advocating conservation, remembering all the other rules of the road, and losing fish we'd otherwise land because of de-barbing.

All of these activities compromise, to greater or lesser degrees, the way we'd like to do things. They take time, patience, and effort. But we made a decision and must accept the downside. Fishing today involves a level of responsibility our fathers and grandfathers never had to deal with.

So, what's a few Palm Beach Releases in the grand scheme of things? ♦

Fishing Letters

by Art Neumann

What follows is another installment of Art Neumann's "Fishing Letters." These gems of stream craft and trout lore were included in the catalog Art mailed each year to faithful friends and customers from his Wanigas Rod Company. Although they were written some thirty or forty years ago, the insights these "Fishing Letters" gave us into Mr. Trout's world are as fresh today as they were then. After all, wisdom and truth are timeless. Read and enjoy.

Sometimes a man is carried away by an insatiable desire to report the unusual, promote the revolutionary and discuss the postgraduate to the extent that he completely neglects basic fundamentals. The awakening can come unexpectedly. We were eating lunch the other day and, as is usually the case, talk got around to fishing. One thing led to another and before I knew it I was expounding with gusto on the relative merits of the various types of trout flies. Just as I was slipping into overdrive, Maurice Suave, one of the group, jarred me to a halt with, "Art, I don't want to appear stupid, but just what is the difference between a streamer, a wet fly, a nymph, and a dry fly?" That was the awakening. Here I've been practicing; promoting and writing about fly fishing all these years and never once have I

bothered to explain the difference between the various kinds of flies. Right then and there I resolved that in the next issue of the *Wanigas News* there'd be a return to fundamentals. Here, then, for the benefit of novice and veteran alike, is a simple explanation of fly types, their intention and their use.

We'll start with dry flies not only because they're best known but also because dry fly fishing is the easiest to master. As the name implies, dry flies are fished dry. They are floated on top of the water. They imitate insects that have fallen on the water. These can be either land insects like the grasshopper and the ant or they can be water insects like the mayfly and the stone fly. Regardless of type, the fly you use must be a reasonable facsimile of the natural insect prevalent at the time. What's more, it must be delivered naturally. This calls for a delicate rod, a matching line and a tapered leader. While it's possible to fish them downstream, dry flies are most effective when fished upstream against the current. One fly at a time is the rule and it must be cast softly on the water, float high and drift on the current without drag. In the first two months of the season most dry fly fishing is evening fishing or fishing when a great quantity of a given mayfly is present over the water. This calls for a precise duplication of the natural, not only so far as size is concerned, but also so far as shape, general cast and shade is concerned. It's the reason, or at least the excuse for, why so many of us carry ten

times more flies than we really need. But it is a challenging kind of dry fly fishing and, because of the heavy concentration of feeding fish, usually is the most productive. Later on, in July and August, most dry fly fishing is middle of the day fishing. What's more, it's area fishing where you cover the water rather than cast only to rising fish. It is the kind of fishing that Buy Garber, Bill Pochelon, Doc Mason and the late Otto Kessel and George O'Brien have immortalized. It is the season of the midge, the Royal Coachman and the grasshopper—of low water, long casts and ultra fine leaders. But one thing's sure. Whether you fish in April or September, midday or evening, there's nothing that can equal the excitement and the thrill of watching Old Ironsides gracefully rise to your carefully cast dry.

Next come wet flies. Wet flies are tied to imitate drowned insects and are fished sunken or wet. They are similar to dry flies in appearance but are usually tied with wings flat along the body instead of upright and with heavy hooks and soft hackle so that they sink readily. At one time, it was the only kind of trout fly used. Today it is the least used. Two or three can be cast at one time and on one line. The conventional method of fishing them is to cast across and quartering downstream and permit the fly to drift with the current until it has straightened out below you. Gentle action may or may not be imparted to the fly depending on how the

fish are disposed toward them at the time. The strike can occur anytime but it usually comes just as the fly swings across the current below you. Wet flies are a good bet early in the season or anytime fish do not appear to be active at the surface. Best patterns are either drab or bright, with few in between, the former being imitative, the latter attractive. One or more of each type, in casts up to four, the legal limit, spaced about 18" apart, makes a good assembly.

Now we come to least understood, yet the most productive of all trout flies – the nymph. Nymphs and mayflies, stone flies, caddis flies and the like, are in their larva or nymphal state. They live among the stones, logs and vegetation of the stream bottom and when water temperatures, weather etc. are favorable they rise to the surface or crawl to the bank, shed their nymphal skin and emerge as mature, winged insects. It has been said that up to 80% of a trout's diet consists of nymphs. Good nymph fishermen contend that, given an opportunity, they can clean out a stream fishing nymphs. But, perhaps fortunately, there are but few good nymph fishermen. The reason is simple. Because the fly cannot be seen, it is difficult to tell when a fish has taken and, consequently, when to strike. The entire success or failure of nymphing centers around this one thing. Learn when to strike and you have it mastered. Good nymph fishermen develop a sort of sixth sense that finds them striking almost by instinct. But in the beginning it is possible to employ a trick or two that will

help. One is to attach a dry fly to the leader and let it act as a bobber. The other is to pinch on a very small split shot about 18" up from the tip fly. This serves the useful purpose of taking up slack and also helps the nymph get down deep where the trout lie. This can also be accomplished with the use of weighted nymphs. Then, whenever the line or leader hesitates or moves, strike immediately, however slight the deviation. If you can feel the strike, it already is too late. Good nymph patterns are scarce but most stores carry some. Choose those which tend to suggest food rather than imitate it, are drab in color and sparsely dressed. Use as long and as fine a leader as is practical, cast quartering upstream and across and let the fly drift motionless. Fish slow and don't become discouraged. Like anything difficult, the reward is in proportion to the effort put forth—and nymphing is no exception.

I've deliberately left streamers until the last. I hope, by so doing, to make them the last you'll forget. A lot of you reading this are bait fisherman. Fine. I once was myself. I don't bait fish anymore though. Not because I frown on it but because I find fly fishing so much more fun. I'm sure you'd find it that way too—if you gave it a chance. A logical start would be with streamers. That's because streamer fishing is a lot like bait fishing except that you use a fly. As a matter of fact, your streamer is actually a feathered imitation of a kind of bait—a minnow. And trout eat an awful lot of minnows, especially big trout. Night

fishermen rarely use anything else. But there are a few things you should know before you start. First, be sure your streamers are weighted. A streamer is a fast water fly and unless it's weighted you won't be able to keep it under the water where it belongs. If there are a lot of deep pools where you fish, use a sinking line as well. It will get your fly down where the big ones live. In early season use a good size fly—a #4 or #6. Best Michigan patterns are the tapered Royal Coachman, Black Ghost, and Black Dace. Later on, as the water clears and stream levels stabilize, go to 10's and 12's. And fish more than one streamer at a time. Try a big one on the tip and a smaller one up a couple of feet. It's a good trick. Don't use too short a leader. A ten-footer is best. Cast across and, if possible, a little upstream, on a slack line. Don't move the fly until the current has taken up the slack you've cast. Then work the streamer in irregular jerks so that it runs downstream. And hang on tight. They hit hard. ♦

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