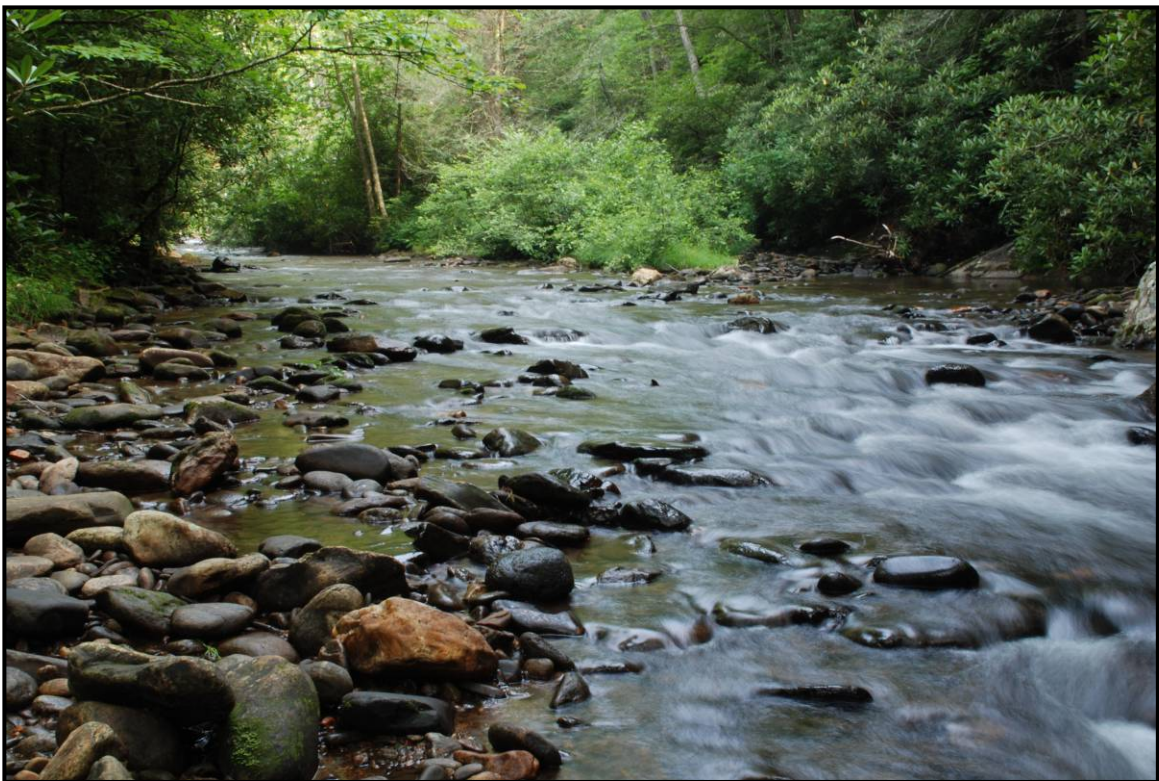


# Trout Unlimited

## Land Protection Project: Success Stories and Case Studies



September 2010





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## **Case Study: St. Joe River, Idaho**

### ***Example of TU partnering to support Working Forest Conservation Easements***

The Potlatch Corporation, headquartered in Spokane, Washington, is a mid-sized integrated forest products company with roughly 1.5 million acres of timberland in Idaho, Minnesota, and Arkansas. They are the largest private landowner in both Idaho and Minnesota and one of the largest in Arkansas. Potlatch's 670,000 acres in Idaho contains extensive wildlife habitat including over 1,500 miles of coldwater streams and it is well integrated with federal and state public lands.



During the 1990s technology boom, the stock of many traditional resource companies performed relatively poorly. Integrated forest products companies in particular lagged the indices and Wall Street began to assert pressure to improve performance. Of particular interest was the underlying value of the timberlands of these companies which was not reflected in their stock price. Throughout the industry, management began to look for ways to realize this value. Some companies separated their manufacturing facilities from the land base or sold the land outright. There was also much consolidation through mergers and acquisition. In New England, for example, all formerly industrially owned timberlands were sold off with most being purchased by Timber Management Investment Organizations.

Potlatch, however, took a significantly different approach, choosing to remain independent and continue to own the bulk of their land base. One of Potlatch's strategies has been to monetize non-timber values inherent in their land base through the sale of Working Forest Conservation Easements – in which they retain the timber rights but are paid to transfer the development and recreation rights and preserve certain sensitive sites.

28,000 of those Potlatch acres are along the St. Joe River in Idaho. "In the lower 48, the St. Joe is the place you have to be if you want to save bull trout" says TU Director of Resources Joe McGurrin. When the Trust for Public Land negotiated an agreement to purchase conservation easements on a substantial part of the Potlatch land, including the St. Joe, TU joined the effort. The easement secured protection for critical river frontage and Potlatch agreed to practice forestry under certification by the Forest Stewardship Council, further protecting the quality of the watershed.

The project successfully obtained a grant through the Forest Legacy program and TU secured some of the private funds needed for match. TU highlighted the high quality, unfragmented habitat for native cutthroat and bull trout to obtain a \$500,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Acres for America program, funded by Walmart.

## Upper Connecticut River, New Hampshire

### *Example of TU's scientific expertise benefitting a major river corridor protection project*

In 2005, the owner of a 2100 acre tract near the headwaters of the Connecticut River in New Hampshire approached the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests with an offer to sell. His alternative plan, should the land trust not be able to pursue the purchase, was to sell to a developer for upscale recreational homes.

In a two year campaign, the Forest Society developed a collaborative partnership with TU, and the NH Fish and Game Department that raised \$2.8 million dollars to purchase the property and establish a stewardship fund. TU's interest was in protecting the 6 miles of river frontage, retaining public angling access and identifying opportunities on the land for stream habitat enhancement for Eastern Brook Trout.



TU contributed to the project in two important ways: First, TU staff completed a thorough analysis of the property using the Conservation Success Index (CSI), identifying the current habitat condition, threats to the habitat integrity and the benefits from securing the land's permanent protection from development. The report prepared by TU was instrumental in successfully securing a \$500,000 grant from Acres for America, granted through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

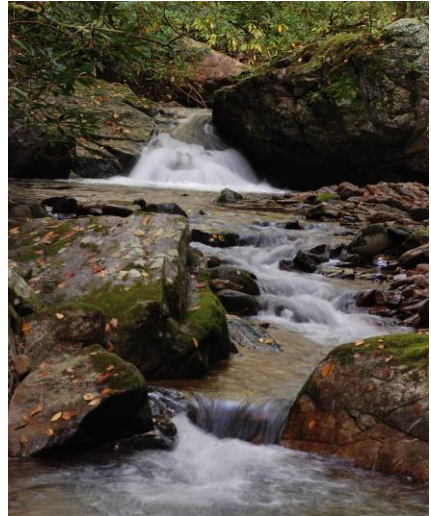
The Forest Society and TU also mailed a campaign fundraising letter to all TU members in 5 New England states. That letter, and donations from all 7 of the New Hampshire chapters of TU, resulted more than \$30,000 additional contributions to the project.

Now that the land is protected and under the ownership of the Forest Society, TU staff are helping with analysis of the condition of small headwaters streams on the property and looking into projects to enhance angler access to the river.

## **Rocky Fork, Tennessee**

### ***Example of TU's advocacy for a watershed-scale land protection project in the East***

Rocky Fork, a 9,624 acre parcel named after the pristine trout stream that runs down its center, creates a vast, unfragmented haven with over 16 miles of stream, approximately 4 miles being classified as a hybridized population of Southern Appalachian Brook Trout. According to the US Forest Service, the property is the largest unprotected high-elevation tract of land in the southern Appalachian Mountains. Approximately 30 minutes south from Johnson City, Tennessee and 35 minutes north from Asheville, North Carolina, the tract lies within the Cherokee National Forest and abuts the Pisgah National Forest.



The property owner, New Forestry LLC decided to sell the property to The Conservation Fund and The USDA Forest Service in collaboration with the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy and many others. The partnership then undertook a major advocacy effort to secure federal funding to add the property to the national forest.

Rocky Fork's protection is an excellent vehicle for telling the land conservation/sportsmen benefit story. The sheer size alone draws attention and will realize the protection of an entire watershed and pristine streams, as well as magnificent views. The parcel is known to the recreational community and draws anglers from across the region. The Conservation Fund requested TU's help in garnering grassroots support for a significant congressional appropriation for FY11 and perhaps additional help with state and regional funding.

## **Murphy Ranch, Emigrant, Montana**

### ***Example of land trust conservation easement and TU habitat restoration***

The Gallatin Valley Land Trust, a regional land trust based in Bozeman, worked with TU on a project to both protect and restore North Fork Fridley Creek. The Murphy's ranch, 22 miles south of Livingston, Montana has been in their ownership since 1953. North Fridley Creek was a historically important spawning and rearing habitat for Yellowstone Cutthroat, as well as wild brown and rainbow trout in the Yellowstone River. The joint project not only secured a permanent conservation easement on the Ranch, but engineered and constructed irrigation improvements, channel improvements and habitat enhancement along with establishing dedicated water rights for instream flows. As a result the creek has been restored to its historic productivity, the ranch operation achieved economic improvements and the land has been permanently protected from development.

**Link to video:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20d5ktoMsnw>

## **Wisconsin Council, Pine Creek**

### ***Example of new statewide land protection fund directed to land trust projects***



Pine Creek is a small tributary of Lake Pepin that feeds directly into the Mississippi River. TU's local chapters have collaborated with the West Wisconsin Land Trust and Wisconsin DNR to protect and restore habitat. In 2007 volunteers from the Kiap-TU-Wish, Twin Cities and Ojibseau chapters worked on restoration on 4000 acres of native brook trout habitat. Today, nearly all the land along Pine Creek is in public or conservation trust ownership, but a 40 acre tract near the headwaters is being proposed for purchase by the WLT and the newly created "Watershed Access Fund" of the Wisconsin TU Council will provide an initial grant to support the fundraising.

TU is supporting other land conservation projects in the state, including in Dane County, within the "Driftless Area" of southwestern Wisconsin. At the end of 2008, the Southern Wisconsin Chapter and State Council have contributed funds to the Natural Heritage Land Trust and County for the acquisition of 9 permanent easements on the West Branch of the Sugar River, Gordon Creek and German Valley Creek. In less than two years, this collaboration will have protected just over 6 miles of trout stream frontage. The TU collaboration with the Natural Heritage Trust is also working to engage landowners on Vermont Creek a tributary of the storied Black Earth Creek.

Former TU NLC member Dan Wisniewski points out that "Southern Wisconsin TU, the county and DNR have a good history of cooperative stream restoration projects and it is expected that restoration would be part of most or all of these easements."

## **West Wisconsin:**

### ***Example of a chapter raising funds for purchased conservation easements***

In 2008 and 2009 Kiap-TU-Wish has worked with the West Wisconsin Land Trust on the Pine Creek restoration project in Maiden Rock, WI. The chapter along with the Wisconsin DNR, the National Fish and Wildlife Service and Twin Cities Trout Unlimited have restored approximately 3600 feet of this native brook trout stream. The chapter provided volunteer labor, funds and fund raising in working on this project with the WWLT as the landowner. The project was designated as one of the 10 waters to



watch nationally in 2009. Please refer to [www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org), 10 Waters to watch for a description of the project. The chapter is hoping to further pursue this project in 2010.

In 2008, Kiap-TU-Wish donated \$6000 to the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust (KRLT), in River Falls, Wisconsin for their Protect the Kinni Capital Campaign. This donation was made to assist the land trust in raising funds to purchase conservation easements or outright land acquisition in the Kinnickinnic River Watershed. Chapter funds were used to purchase and protect an important 127 acre family plot. The chapter worked on fund raising with the KRLT on other projects also.

The chapter has found working with land trusts to be vital in pursuing the conservation, protection and restoration of cold water resources in western Wisconsin.

### **Vermont Creek, Dane County, Wisconsin**

#### ***Example of local TU chapters assisting county and land trusts to secure permanent protection of lands originally protected with term easements***

**Background:** As part of Trout Unlimited's growing effort to promote partnerships among TU chapters and councils, private landowners, land trusts and public agencies, a pilot project was initiated by the Southern Wisconsin TU chapter (SWTU), with support from the TU State Council. The pilot involves a new Dane County program (which TU helped initiate through county-level advocacy) aimed at securing permanent conservation easements on trout streams. About 50 miles of stream habitat where restoration work had been allowed under shorter term easements with private landowners were identified as the first priority for permanent protection under the program.

**On-the-ground:** On Vermont Creek, TU raised over \$16,000 to go toward the purchase of two permanent conservation and access easements along a 130 foot riparian corridor. Combined with additional in-kind match from the local land trust and funding from a local foundation, the county purchased easements on two properties for \$112,000. Access points on each end of the stream that cross the landowner's property allow public access to 1 ½ miles of stream that had previously been unavailable for fishing. In addition to the easement payment, two landowners also benefited from \$150,000 of stream restoration work at no cost.

**Challenges & lessons:** Appraisals for conservation/access corridors can be tricky. In Wisconsin, one method for dealing with this was to set an appraised price per linear foot for stream access for each watershed. This method treats neighbors equally and provides some certainty for the negotiation of a purchased access easement with landowners. State requirements for individual appraisals, however, can sometimes override this plan. The availability of county or state funding for this type of program may be limited in your region, and fee-for-access arrangements should be very carefully weighed against other possible scenarios.

**Long term implications:** The permanent conservation and public access easements help protect past taxpayer investments in these restoration projects. In the past two years, Dane County has spent about \$400,000 to buy permanent access easements on over 12 miles of trout water. The cost of county easement purchases is often matched by grants from the State Department of Natural Resources Stewardship program. Additionally, the work to restore and protect Vermont Creek spurred the state to restore significant stretches of public land upstream.

## **Oklahoma**

### ***Example of TU grassroots bringing conservation seller to the table.***

The Oklahoma TU Chapter was instrumental in providing information to the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Department of the opportunity to purchase the 340-acre Watt family property which included both sides of the Lower Illinois River. This is a tailwater to Lake Tenkiller in East Central Oklahoma near Gore. ODWC acted quickly to contract the purchase and used funds raised from a Fishing and Hunting Legacy Permit fee. At the current time Oklahoma Chapter and the 89'er Chapter in Oklahoma have donated over \$25,000 for a fish habitat improvement project on the Watts Property. A 0.5 mile catch-and-release area is also a result of a request made by the Oklahoma Chapter on the property.

## **Western Pennsylvania**

### ***Example of a TU chapter partnering with land trusts on habitat improvement***

The Forbes Trail Chapter of TU helped secure funding from the Coldwater Heritage Partnership to do a "Mill Creek Watershed Conservation Plan", with cooperation of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC), one of the largest land trusts in the state. The plan focused on various aspects of protecting and improving the stream, including acid mine drainage remediation, riparian vegetation, reducing siltation, and land protection. Another collaboration seeking to complete both stream restoration and land conservation is the Allegheny Wins Coalition. Four TU chapters, WPC, county, state and federal agencies have joined in this effort to with the mission to "promote protection, restoration and habitat improvement activities in watersheds that lie entirely or partially in the Allegheny National Forest..."

Other TU activities in Pennsylvania have included a partnership of chapters that created a separate organization to acquire and hold easements on streams in their region. This separate entity is backed up in its stewardship responsibilities by WPC, which holds executory interest in the easements.

There are 53 TU chapters in Pennsylvania, perhaps more than any other state. This creates tremendous opportunities for collaboration on land conservation projects that benefit coldwater streams. As one TU member observed "PA has more land trusts than

most other states so we have way more opportunities for these types of partnerships than most other states."

### **Madison River, Montana:**

#### ***An example of TU working with partners to protect a famous public access site***

When the 800-acre Candlestick Ranch, containing the famous "Three Dollar Bridge" on the Madison River was put up for sale in 2000, TU jumped at the chance to get involved. The ranch contains three miles of frontage on the fabled Madison River and a critical spring creek that provides spawning and rearing habitat for trout. TU teamed up with the River Network, local fly shop operators Craig and Jackie Matthews and they raised a \$200,000 option payment in just 30 days. Ultimately, working with the Montana Land Reliance (the statewide land trust), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Trust for Public land, a total of 1700 acres of land around the Three Dollar Bridge, including angling access, has been protected.

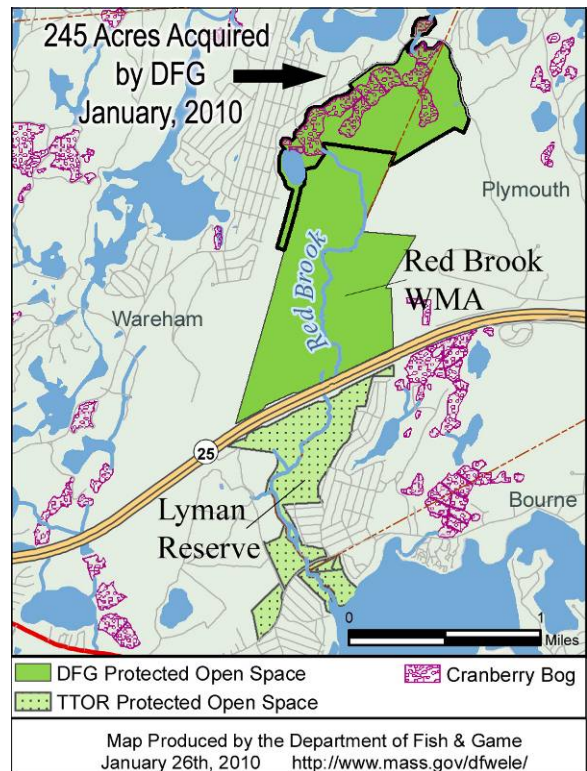


### **Red Brook, Massachusetts**

#### ***An example of TU's commitment to habitat restoration paving the way for permanent protection***

A very rare population of Brook Trout in the northeast spends part of their life cycle in the ocean, and then returns to coastal streams in the fall to spawn. One of those rare brooks is Red Brook on Cape Cod. For many years this brook was significantly altered by nearby cranberry farmers who used the water from the brook to flood their bogs. The "salters" somehow managed to hang on, however, and in 2000, the Lyman family, owners of the land along the brook approached the local TU chapter and asked if TU would like to accept a gift of the property.

TU members wisely acknowledged that land ownership and management is not TU's expertise and suggested instead that the land be donated to the Trustees of Reservations (TTOR), the statewide land trust. TTOR accepted the gift in 2001 and with the assistance of TU, the MA Fish and Game Department has embarked on a multiyear program to restore the brook and replenish the coaster trout populations. TU volunteers provide many hours of on site assistance in removing small dams and culverts and restoring



riparian areas with native species plantings. Already, the salter population has been documented to be on the rise, demonstrating the synergy of land protection and habitat restoration partnerships.

This TU/land trust collaboration has inspired even more conservation. Early in 2010 the state announced that it had completed acquisition of another 245 acres of the Red Brook watershed owned by A.D. Makepeace Company, the world's largest cranberry grower. This purchase was called "the most important acquisition for the agency this year" by Fish and Game Commissioner Mary Griffin. The purchase will enable the state, in collaboration with TU and others to achieve further restoration including culvert, dike and berm removal along with re-establishing the main channel of Red Brook.

Warren Winders of TU had this to say about the latest acquisition:

*“Steve Hurley, our Southeastern District Fisheries Biologist, was the driving force behind the effort. Our belief has always been that the restoration of Red Brook would not be complete until the problems caused by the bogs had been mitigated. I never really dreamed that the state would buy the bogs.”*

*This is an astounding and inspiring vote of confidence in TU by the state of Massachusetts and A. D. Makepeace.”*

### **Great Bay and Basil Woods TU chapters, New Hampshire**

#### ***An example of a TU chapter regularly contributing funding for land protection***

Some TU chapters are always on the lookout for land protection projects to support. Since being asked more than a decade ago to make a donation to the campaign to save Clarksville Pond, a northern New Hampshire brook trout pond, the Basil Woods Chapter has regularly contributed funds from the proceeds of its annual conservation banquet to local and statewide land protection projects. These have included donations to the Connecticut Lakes Headwaters project (171,000 acres), the Merrimack River Conservation Initiative (1,000 acres with 5.5 miles of river frontage), and the Oxbow Project (300 acres with 1.5 miles frontage on the Merrimack. In the nearby Seacoast area of the state, the Great Bay Chapter of TU has developed highly successful relationship with business sponsors and as a result donated funds for land protection projects by local and statewide land trusts on the Isinglass, Salmon Falls, and Lamprey Rivers. They are now working with land trusts and the NH Fish and Game Department to protect a rare cold water pond very near the state's seacoast.

## Thornton River, Virginia

### *An example of a growing partnership to restore habitat for brook trout and diadromous fish on protected lands*

Over the years the Piedmont Environmental Council and Virginia Outdoors Foundation have partnered across the state to protect tens of thousands of acres of land. In the Rappahannock River watershed, there are a number of protected parcels in the subwatershed of the Thornton River and its tributaries that flow out of the Shenandoah National Park. In 2009, TU worked with one of the landowners of a protected farm in the Sperryville area to remove an old mill dam thus reconnecting the robust brook trout populations in the upper Thornton River watershed to the lower Thornton and Hazel Rivers and to the main Rappahannock River. This dam removal restores the potential for diadromous fish runs from the Chesapeake Bay to access the pristine waters of Shenandoah National Park.



That successful dam removal inspired a vision of restoring native brook trout to more of the watershed by reconnecting the headwaters streams in the Park to the larger streams in the valley. RAPPflow, a watershed advocacy group, is partnering with TU in creating a new project: "Restoring Native Brook Trout Cold Water Streams in Rappahannock County: a Green Infrastructure Project." The project will focus on the Upper Hazel River and work improve water quality by excluding livestock from streams and restoring riparian vegetation, and engaging landowners in conversations with PEC about establishing additional conservation easements in the watershed. The program hopes to restore brook trout to more than 4 miles of stream.

## Mossy Creek, Augusta County, Virginia

### *An example of public access permit system for fishing on private land*

**Background:** Flowing through rolling farmland, Mossy Creek is a classic limestone stream that features tough-to-catch brown trout, undulating masses of aquatic vegetation, swift runs, and steep drop-offs. This challenging water is bank-fishing only but has rewarded many patient anglers with 25 inch brown hook-ups.

**On-the-ground:** In 1978, VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), Trout Unlimited, and landowners along the stream partnered to create a world-class fishery. It was sealed with a simple, but very important agreement that all anglers must obtain a landowner permission to fish card (available for free from the local DGIF office or the landowner) along with a valid Virginia fishing license.

These permission cards have been key to bringing landowners on board for several reasons. First, anglers who seek out the card are making an extra (albeit relatively small) effort to fish Mossy Creek which seems to help self-select for intentional users. Additionally, the landowners have a right to revoke permission cards from abusers. Although revocation has never been needed, it gives the landowners comfort that a standard fishing license does not afford. Special seasons and regulations are also printed on the back.

DGIF handles the landowner relations, but the local TU members also provide key support. TU volunteers work annually to keep livestock fences in good repair and also maintain the fence crossing stiles, in addition to inspecting the streams for other access-related issues. Perhaps most importantly, the local TU chapter, in partnership with the state council, holds an annual landowner appreciation dinner. This popular social occasion attracts 40-60 cooperating and neighboring landowners from two streams under this management scheme.

**Lessons:** Landowners may be very willing to ‘trade’ access for fisheries restoration and management. TU’s careful management of the stream access, without much bother or interaction with the landowners has been important. In this instance, leaving the landowner relationships to DGIF staff has worked well and avoided potential pitfalls of changes in volunteer availability from the TU chapter.

**Long term implications:** On Mossy Creek, the willingness of landowners to allow fish stocking and public access has built an enduring and beneficial relationship for all parties. The landowners are comforted by DGIF and TU’s ability to ‘look out’ for the land and solve problems before they arise.

### **Amicalola Creek, Georgia**

#### ***An example of a TU state council and chapters stepping up for land conservation***

In late 2009, the TU Georgia State Council and all twelve Georgia chapters pooled and donated \$20,000 to support TNC and Georgia DNR’s purchase of the 469 acre Forestar Tract on Amicalola Creek. The purchase protects 1.8 miles of the creek which lies in the heart of the Georgia trout fishing region.

A retiring DNR commissioner spoke at the Georgia statewide TU gathering and later contacted the state council chair asking for support in purchasing the property. The state council discussed the idea and invited the state’s chapters to participate with a lead gift of \$8000, enticing all chapters to contribute to the cause. Chapter donations ranged from \$100 to \$3000 and one chapter successfully challenged other chapters using a matched donation. The new DNR commissioner gave a presentation at a subsequent council meeting and was presented with a letter announcing the donation. The council then sent all 14 checks to the Georgia Nature Conservancy (TNC is an intermediary holder of the property), along with a cover letter and a spreadsheet detailing the origin of the checks.

“Some folks argued that DNR would eventually get the Forestar tract with or without our help. That's probably true but I'm glad and proud that TU stepped up and made a sizeable donation. It raised our profile in the conservation community and strengthened our partnership with DNR.” - *Charlie Breithaupt, GATU Council Chair*

Lessons learned from the experience included: interactions between state agency staff, land trust staff and TU councils and chapters create connections that lead to innovative work, and that chapters are willing to donate a small amount to support big projects – especially when they can see a much larger outcome in their combined efforts. Additionally, the project demonstrated that chapters are willing to support land conservation projects that contribute to a state resource outside of the chapter range.

### **North Mills River, Henderson County, North Carolina**

*Example of regional TU chapters and councils pooling funds to secure an important fishery and give the land trust partner time to secure federal funds.*



TU's Land Protection staff, in partnership with the region's grassroots members, recently completed a campaign to raise \$30,000 to protect a key property along one of North Carolina's most popular trout streams. The property, an in-holding in the Pisgah National Forest along the North Mills River, holds crucial access for angling, fisheries management and other passive recreation and had been under threat of development for years. The funds, generously donated by regional TU members, chapters and councils, will enable the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy to secure the property from development and allow the Forest Service time to seek funding in order to add the property to the public trust. Once the Forest Service transaction is complete, the \$30,000 will be returned to TU to be used as a Coldwater Land Conservancy fund for Western North Carolina.

The property will be secured in the fall of 2010.

### **The Scantic River: Connecticut**

*An example of the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture helping identify a watershed in need of land protection to preserve a healthy brook trout population*

The Scantic River Headwaters Conservation Project is an assemblage of land (approximately 1100 acres) located in Stafford, CT involving 3 landowners who are interested in protecting their land through conservation easement. The cornerstone property is 810 acres, of which 775 will be protected. Protection of the three properties

that make up project area will link these properties to 6,000+/- acres of existing conservation land in Connecticut and across the border into Massachusetts.

Of particular interest to TU is the fact that the project area was recognized by the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture as having some of the most important brook trout fishery resources remaining in the eastern United States. Specifically, the EBTJV ranked the entire Project Area as "intact," meaning 90 to 100 percent of the Eastern brook trout's historical habitat is occupied by self-reproducing brook trout).

The bulk of the funding for the purchase of the easements will come from the Federal Forest Legacy program. The project was ranked first in the state and is now at the federal level of competition. TPL should hear within the next month whether it has been placed on the President's list for funding. Assuming we are able to get federal legacy funds, we will then be looking to other sources of funding - both public and private - in order to complete the project.

TU's letter of support for the project was greatly appreciated and was included in the state's application for federal legacy funding.

### **Buck Run, Clearfield County, Pennsylvania**

#### ***Example of TU applying abandoned mine drainage funding for land protection***

Trout Unlimited (TU) provided funding to the ClearWater Conservancy to place a conservation easement on approximately 60 acres in Clearfield County, Pennsylvania to protect several unnamed tributaries and a segment of Buck Run, the only documented naturally producing trout waters in the Deer Creek sub-watershed.

Protection of the Buck Run brook trout fishery as a potential recolonizing population was a priority for TU's Eastern Abandoned Mine Program because approximately 15 stream miles, 1/3 the total stream miles in the Deer Creek subwatershed, are impaired by acid mine drainage (AMD) and are subsequently devoid of aquatic life.

In addition to Buck Run's ability to serve as a recolonizing population for improved streams, TU recognized the need to protect the area from the potential development of the area's Marcellus Shale natural gas resource. The loss of the Buck Run brook trout population to sedimentation from gas well infrastructure or water quality impairment from the extraction process would be a catastrophic loss to the subwatershed as a whole. As such, the conservation easement placed on this property only allows for gas extraction and associated drilling activities via horizontal drilling techniques at depths well below the water table so as not to disturb the surface or near-surface natural resources.



## **Sandy Run, Blair County, Pennsylvania**

### ***Example of TU using mitigation funds for acquisition of wetlands for public use***

The John F Kennedy Chapter of TU dedicated \$90,000 for the purchase of 50 wetland and floodplain acres along Sandy Run, a trout spawning tributary to the Little Juniata River in Blair County. The funds were originally established as mitigation for destruction of springs and wetlands for a shopping mall development.

A target of the Little Juniata River Association for years, collaboration with the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, Pennsylvania DEP, Blair County Conservation District, and the local TU chapter and resolute determination made this project a success. The partners will restore habitat to Sandy Run over a ½ mile section previously used as a trout hatchery. This property was identified as one of the most important wetlands in Blair County along a spring-fed stream classified as Exceptional Value.