

January 19, 2023

Bitterroot Trout Unlimited

Annual Chapter Report

The chapter had a good year coming out of the Covid gathering limitations. Many meetings were done by Zoom but we gradually transitioned to the in-person format with meetings and presentations at the Hamilton Elks Club.

Membership in the chapter is currently 262. It has fluctuated slightly over the past 4 years. According to MTU this is fairly typical of the other chapters in the state.

Significant Activities

- The Lee Metcalf Refuge stream restoration project. Our project manager Christine Brissette has been doing a great job of pulling together funds from a variety of sources to fund this major project. The project involves removing 2 50-year-old standpipes that have been a barrier to fish passage. Once they are removed an additional 2.5 miles of Burnt Fork Creek will be open as trout habitat. Additionally, the project will include restoring vegetation along the stream to provide shade along the stream bank.
- A major component of the restoration will be the revegetation. The chapter received the award of an Embrace a Stream grant from TU national. It was the top ranked grant application in the country. The chapter has made a significant commitment to commit both cash and labor to this restoration. The project is expected to get underway late in 2023 (confirm). A supplemental funds program was undertaken that raised over \$10,000 towards the project. The chapter was also awarded a hand crafted bamboo rod for being the top project. The rod will be auctioned in 2023.
- BRTU undertook a shortened version of the Buggers program in 2022. This is the 27th year of the program. Over 35 youngsters received instruction in fish habitat, fly tying, fly casting and finally fishing. For 2023 we will do the full program and are in the process of signing up the participants.
- BRTU is in its third year of the Trout in the Classroom. We now have successful programs at Hamilton, Corvallis, Darby, and Florence High

Schools. Additionally, we provide technical support to the program which just started at the West Fork Job Corps center.

- We recently completed a display at the Ravalli County Historical Society which illustrates the history of fly fishing in the Bitterroot Valley. Chuck Stranahan was extremely helpful in this project and donated several antique bamboo rods as well as numerous flies, reels, and other historic items. The museum did a great job of setting up the display.
- With the help of member Bob Miller recently completed the process of setting up an account with Morgan Stanley so the chapter could accept the donation of stocks from donors. Bob started this off with a nice donation of stock.
- Midway through the year the chapter conducted a strategic planning session with the help of a professional facilitator. The resulting plan will help to guide the direction of the chapter in coming years.
- We conducted a successful although rainy kids day camp. Bill Pfeiffer from Montana TU was the instructor. The kids learned stream ecology, insect identification, fly casting, and then did some fishing. The river was high so the fishing was limited to Hieronymus Pond.
- Once again, we participated in the Conservation District's Woody Debris Task Force. As part of that we will be exploring a system used by the State of Oregon to track safety hazards on the river and alert users to the dangers.
- 2023
- Last year we received a RAC grant from the county and the Forest Service. The project involves rebuilding a boat launch ramp on the West Fork of the Bitterroot. The work will be done during low water this Fall.
- Coming Attraction. We have agreed to do a presentation exchange with the Greater Boston TU chapter. Christine will present a virtual program on the Lee Metcalf project. This will happen in February and be announced in the newsletter. They in turn will do a presentation on a dam removal project they successfully completed.
- SULA Fishing Access site project with the Forest Service and the Bitterroot Land Trust

Prepared by David Ward