

# TULLY GRAM

To conserve, protect, and enhance the quality and quantity of the cold water resources in Berks County, Pennsylvania

## TULLY TALK

I'd like to introduce myself as the current Chapter President, having just enjoyed the first year of my first term. We welcome 2025 with a renewed energy to continue our fight: there are environmental challenges, an ongoing fight for land rights, and continued defense of public grounds on our doorstep. It's important to remember our mission: continue the fight for conservation and environmental stewardship.

In looking at the year ahead, we're excited to announce that we'll be hosting renowned Penn State Fly Fishing authority, George Daniel, at Berks Nature's Rookery Event Space on November 14th, 2025. We're planning to have some great raffles and giveaways at that event, so you won't want to miss it!

We're continuing our stream monitoring of the Cacoosing and Tulpehocken for turbidity, dissolved solids, nitrates and phosphates, partnering with Berks Nature/Tulpehocken Creek Watershed Association for some leaf pack and ongoing macro- invertebrate studies on some area tributaries. We are always eager to learn of needs for new stream projects and strengthening partnerships with local environmentally-conscience organizations.

Locally, we're looking forward to our Trout In the Classroom activities, of which Berks County is among the top performers. Egg shipments have arrived to the local schools and aquariums are ready to accommodate these hungry salmonids grown to be released in local waters this Spring.

The Cacoosing Dam at the old Van Reed Papermill has been removed, allowing wild trout unabated freedom to spawn in the Class A waterway. The fabled removal of the Bushong Dam on the Schuylkill River is also here. While these are generally positive changes, these free-flowing waterways bring the potential for invasive species, such as the voracious snakeheads, so sometimes our progress has its price.

In 2023 the USACOE entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) with Trout Unlimited (TU) to seek opportunities to "protect, reconnect, restore and sustain cold water fisheries and their watersheds. "The Tulpehocken Creek has a tail water fishery below the USACE Blue Marsh Dam, which poses opportunities to implement environmental flow strategies in collaboration with the Corps to restore and sustain a healthy coldwater fishery downstream of the dam in the face of a warming climate. Our Chapter has submitted a proposal to PA Fish & Boat with supporting flow and temperature data, to request operational modifications to maximize water under 68 degrees for as long as possible into the summer months. More to come on that as we pursue that goal. Please reach out with any ideas or questions!

Mike McLaughlin

Tulpehocken Chapter Trout Unlimited, Inc.



### TCTU Officers and Board

President - Mike McLaughlin  
Vice President - Chris Meyer  
Treasurer - Ed Ulmer  
Secretary - Brenda Bittinger

### Board Members -

Ryan Henderson  
Cathy Curran-Myers  
Benjamin Klopp  
Tom Ham

### Chapter Mail

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Tulpehocken Creek  
Trout Unlimited



Tulpehocken150

Feel free to tag us! #tullytupa

If you're not receiving emails, please contact: b.bittinger@gmail.com and we'll get you on the list!

### Things we're working on currently:

- Consistent flows on the Tully working with Army Core of Engineers and BCCD.
- Fisheries education mural in conjunction with West Reading Borough and SCI

# AN OPEN INVITATION FOR DIALOGUE WITHIN THE CHAPTER



BY: TOM HAM

I'll admit it, for the longest time, the fish I caught was just a fish. Other than the excitement of hooking and landing my catch, I never thought of them as anything more. I grew up fishing and whether it was bass on a crankbait or trout on a worm, I simply loved catching fish. I think it's that way for many folks, especially younger people.

For so long I knew trout were stocked from hatcheries, isn't that how they got in the water for us to catch? Then one Saturday morning in early April, you and countless others gather at the creek before sunrise waiting for the 8am cast, then stand elbow to elbow bickering over crossed lines until you put a few on the stringer. That was PA trout fishing, right?

I sometimes wish I was still like that. But we grow and mature, inevitably we sense there's a bigger picture. Somewhere along the way that picture became clear when its central figure splashed out of the background and into my net.....a wild trout.

I won't oversell that moment and tell you I saw an ethereal glow around the fish whilst trumpets sounded and angels sang a hymn; but I can say in that instant I was thrust from willful ignorance to cursed enlightenment. Like it or not, once the curtain is pulled back, we can't unsee what was once behind it.

I didn't immediately begin a crusade to save wild fish that day, but I became hyper focused on fishing for salmonids, growing more interested and appreciative of trout, their history and habitat.

As kids my brother and I fed on massive bulk bags of generic store brand cereals, diluted versions of Post and Kellogg's varieties. But occasionally the actual Fruity Pebbles or Corn Pops came home in a colorful box containing not even 1/3 the bulk bag volume, but it was the real deal and we felt like kings! I can't help but propose that on some level, catching that wild trout had the same effect on my brain. Compared to the stocked fish I was accustomed to, it was undersized, and not as available- but it was the genuine article and its more vibrant appearance notwithstanding, I sensed an aura of genetic and instinctual superiority.

It's been ages since that critical juncture in my fishing odyssey that has led me to some wonderful experiences and learning. I know now that, native or not, a trout born naturally in its habitat, and having grown to any meaningful size despite all odds against it, will always be superior to its manufactured counterpart. The whys behind that sentiment range in everything from personal preference to deeply held conservation beliefs.

I share my own experience because it resonates with many who may read this, it's a story replicated across the TU community. Acknowledging the dichotomy between stocked and wild trout is among the core tenets of TU's mission, in fact, it's the reason it was founded in 1959. In the 'Policy on Trout Management' found on PATU's website the belief of the organization is clear, no stocking over wild or native fish. The organization has always promoted the notion of taking care of the fish and the fishing will take care of itself.

In their hierarchy of trout priorities TU places the return and health of native species at the top of the list, second would be supporting wild populations of fish and last is hatchery programs to stock waters that otherwise cannot sustain a fishery (a necessity in these modern times).

Personally I play on both teams. I've dedicated time and effort to help TU in fundraising, habitat improvement projects, stream clean-ups and environmental stewardship. I have done my best to promote the chapter and advocate for positive ethics of fishing and proper fish handling. But, I also donate time and effort to a longstanding cooperative nursery, and have personally helped raise thousands of hatchery fingerlings to stockable sizes and have placed untold numbers of trout into local, publicly accessible waters.

Why? Because like many others, I live in a Pennsylvania that simply would not have trout fishing without a robust stocking program managed by the PFBC.

The story, as I understand it (and with brevity), begins in the mid nineteenth century. By then the one-two punch of overfishing and pollution had native trout populations in steep decline. Tasked with solving the problem in March of 1866 the first fish commission was born in Harrisburg. The

goal was obvious, clean up the water and improve fishing. The next ten years would see initial attempts at stocking and development of hatchery plans. In 1950 Pennsylvania experienced its first opening day of an official trout season.

Fast forward another 75 years and the PA trout program has become a massive operation. Last year 435,572 Trout permits and 74,640 Trout/Lake Erie Combo permits were sold. The over half a million permits sold means roughly 76% of license purchasers also choose to fish for PA trout. Whether or not these staggering numbers indicate a success depends on who you ask. Regardless of opinion, the 175 year journey of where it began to where we are is no small thing.

Here are some more numbers to chew on, according to the PFBC website, the fish commission raises and stocks 3.2 million trout with cooperative nurseries adding another 1.2 million. The majority are Rainbow Trout, followed by Browns, then Brookies, and lastly the West Virginia concocted freak show known as Golden Rainbow Trout. Of these four species caught in Pennsylvania, only the Brook Trout is native to our waters. This fact in and of itself speaks volumes to what the stocking program has meant to Pennsylvania trout culture.

These fish are placed in a total of 695 streams and 128 lakes across the state. The PFBC monitors streams for evidence of trout populations that naturally reproduce and designates

waters that are believed to support abundant wild trout numbers. When these waters are positively identified the commission adjusts their trout stocking operations in them, sometimes closing streams or stream sections off from stocking. The list of these waters is well over 600 stream sections, with just as many being monitored or considered for the designation of Wild or Class A streams.

The conversation around stocking over wild fish is difficult, and as mentioned, is a no no in TU's mission. The PFBC does make efforts to avoid it. But there's no denying the fact the success of trout fishing in Pennsylvania is largely driven by stocked fish. The reality is, if they weren't there, many people wouldn't have gotten into the sport and eventually advocate for conservation efforts.

**We'd love your feedback. During my time involved with TU I've heard many times people do not feel informed enough on the subject and therefore struggle to find satisfaction with plans to improve the situation, some aren't even sure it needs to improve. What do you think? Do you feel the efforts of both TU and the PFBC are doing enough? Have you been affected, either positively or negatively, by trout management? When it comes to fishing and conservation, what is important to you?**



**We'd love to hear from you.  
Respond on the website via the QR code.**

## MANATAWNY PROJECT PROGRESS & COMPLETION



# SAVE THE DATE

## TULPEHOCKEN CHAPTER TROUT UNLIMITED GEORGE DANIEL EVENT



**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2025 • BERKS NATURE ROOKERY • TIME: 6-8PM**

We look forward to hosting George Daniel for an evening of story telling, tactics, and more. The event will have food and beverages available along with several raffles.

Stay tuned for more details this summer!

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### OTHER CHAPTER EVENTS HAPPENING

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Check the website or Facebook page for details

**APRIL 7TH**

**Mona filament Cleanup**

Details to come

**JUNE Weekend**

**Fish the Tully with a**

**Buddy**

Details to come

**MAY 10TH**

**Tully Trash & Brush  
Cleanup**

Red Bridge 2-5pm

**JUNE 7 • 10AM**

**Tully Macro Assessment of  
Leaf Packs with TCWA**

Blue Marsh Conf. Center

**Member &  
BOD Meetings  
are still held  
every 3rd  
Wednesday of  
the month in a  
hybrid style.**