



Rip Rap

September Meeting

When: Wednesday, Sept. 2
Where: JR Ranch, Hudson
Dinner: 6:30
Program: 8:00 St. Croix County Planning Department

President's Lines:

I'm sure it is a bit of a surprise to most of you to see that Kiap-TU-Wish had a change in leadership over the summer. I feel privileged and honored to take over as President of our chapter. Hopefully I can continue to lead it with as much vigor and success as my predecessors. I'm glad the Board felt confident in my ability to do the job. But the success and strength of our chapter relies not only on those in leadership roles, but in the entire membership. Everyone should be and can be the eyes, ears, and hands of the chapter. Come to meetings, talk to your board and officers, express yourself, and you'll find that Kiap-TU-Wish needs every single member in order to make good things happen on our streams.

Over the summer, we had some major flare-ups stemming from man's conflicts with Mother Nature. The well-publicized liquid manure spill in Parker Creek is currently in the hands of the St. Croix County District Attorney's office. Our chapter, in cooperation with the Ojibseau Chapter, is trying to make sure that all the facts of the case are brought to light, and punishment is consistent with the charge to the DNR to protect and preserve our public waters. For it's part, the DNR may be planning the reintroduction of brook trout into Parker Creek from other stock currently in the Kinnickinnic system. The brown trout population should rebound quickly enough from spawning migrations from the main stem of the Kinni..

On August 17, John O'Malley and I met with the KRLT Land Committee to discuss our position vis a vis a proposed construction materials landfill expansion in the Kinni watershed. The current landfill is an unlined 50,000 square yard facility, and tests have shown increased levels of sulfates in the surrounding wells. This is apparently the result of sheet rock leaching the chemicals as it decomposes. We

will continue to monitor the situation, and will present a united front to make sure that the expansion plans, which call for a 200,000 yard landfill, safeguard the nearby river.

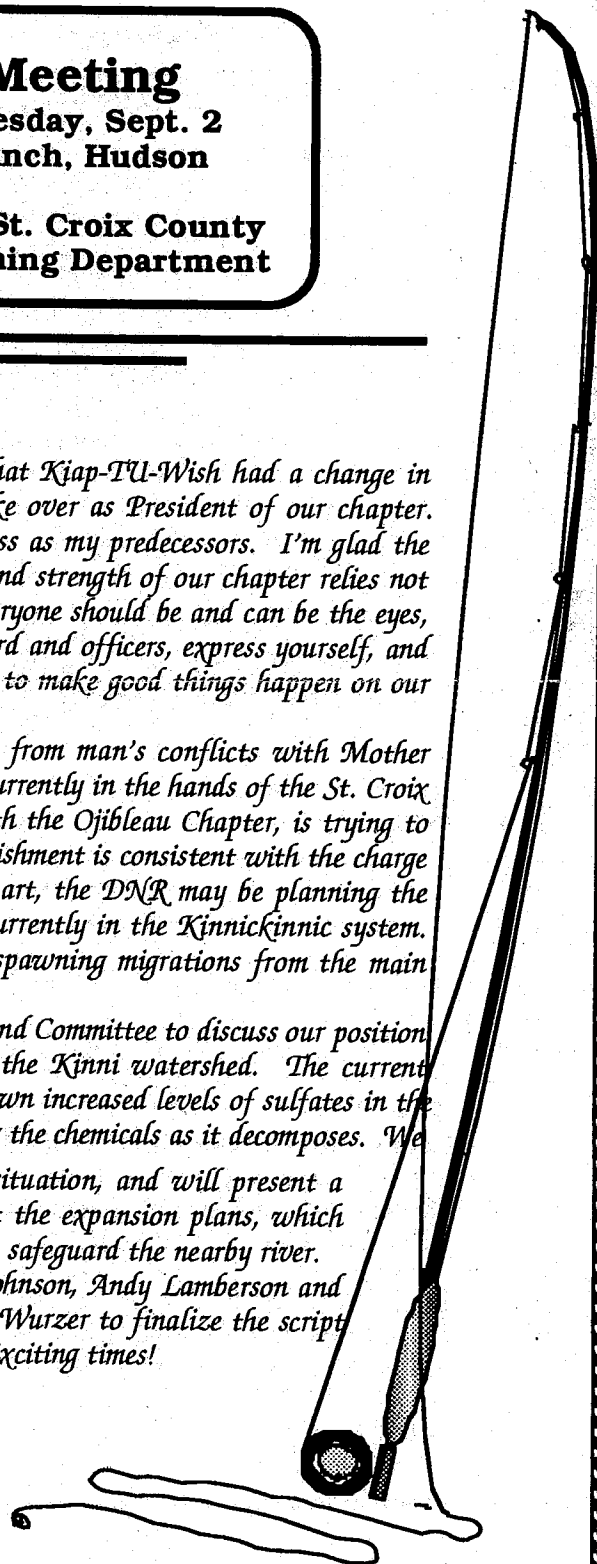
On August 15, Kent Johnson, Andy Lamberson and Gary Horvath met with Cathy Wurzer to finalize the script and begin shooting the video. Exciting times!

Sincerely,

Brent Sittlow, President

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Kiap-TU-Wish Bulletin Board...

River Falls Fishing Clinic a Success...

On Saturday, May 30th, the Chapter hosted another successful fly fishing clinic in River Falls. The object of the clinic was to focus people's attention on the Kinnickinnic River by teaching them to use the river in a recreationally sensitive way and fly fishing was the method. Twenty students were registered for the clinic and additional students signed on that day, pushing the total enrollment to over two dozen. They studied casting, knot tying, entomology, fly selection and stream strategy. After an afternoon full of activities the students were ready for the supper spread out before them, and after eating, they were guided on the River by Kiap-TU-Wish members and fished until dark. In addition, each student received a packet of instructional materials, two leaders and a fly box with a couple dozen flies. Not bad for ten bucks!

Of the Kiap-TU-Wish members who helped make the clinic a success, special thanks goes to **Jon Jacobs** for once again serving as lead teacher, **Bill Hinton** for the casting instruction, **Karen Stifter** for heading up the supper committee and **Gary Horvath** for delivering the ecology and stewardship portion of the program. Many other members served as mentors, guides, teachers, servers, and 'picker-uppers.' They were **Dan Conlee**, **Paul Wiemerslage**, **Dave Ballman**, **Bill Lovegren**, **Brent Sittlow**, **Steve Parry**, **John O'Malley**, **Sean O'Malley**, **Ross Nelson**, **Jim Rees**, **Tony Stifter**, **Karen Jacobs** and **Ted Mackmiller**. Finally, we got donations of flies from a number of folks, but the only two I can remember are **Perry Palin** and **Dave Ballman**. My sincere apologies to the rest of you: I promise to write them all down next year.

Michael Alwin

Fly Vises Needed...

Ken Olson, member of Kiap-TU-Wish, teaches English at UW River Falls. His fiction has been featured in *RipRap* and many know him as a superior cane rod restorer. He teaches a fly fishing course to gifted elementary school children as part of the University's College for Kids program. He also teaches a fly fishing class for Teen University, an equivalent program for high school students. In both these ventures, he discovers that his budget (about \$50/year) falls short of covering expenses necessary to the proper functioning of his classes. He teaches fly tying, knots, casting, stream lore, and introduces children to trout fishing on the Kinni.

Tom Anderson has helped him out in the past with loaner fly rods, reels and lines; he spends his budget money on fly tying materials, but he really needs a source of fly tying vises. He has written to companies which manufacture vises, but many of them are unwilling to donate equipment for a course where a fee is involved. Of course, the fee doesn't go to either Ken or his course. If any of you have used but serviceable vises, or other fly fishing equipment you could afford to part with for a good cause, please contact **Ken Olson** at (715) 425-9070. His e-mail address is Kenneth.O.Olson@uwrf.edu. His home address is 224 E. Broadway St., River Falls, WI 54022.

He says that "An important aspect of my classes are building a sense of community within the class, a sense of community that is safe for everyone in the group, where we can learn without intimidation or discrimination, without mocking or ridicule, where everyone has the opportunity to learn something new and exciting about the significance of fly fishing for trout, and just maybe something about being considerate of others and of the environment."

Skip's Loose Threads

Challenging fast freestone western rivers on foot can be an invitation to disaster....

I felt the first round boulder move under my foot and with it an awful sense of foreboding crept up my spine. The Roaring Fork is a big river, fast, deep and broad, and there's not too many places to cross it. The light an hour before dusk slanted off the broken surface, concealing the shapes that spelled safety or disaster. Most of the shapes were round, polished like billiard balls by the yearly runoff from the ski slopes above Aspen and Basalt. I felt with the toes of my downstream foot, shifting my weight only when I guessed it solid enough to support me. About every third step proved my judgment wrong, the rock shifting, throwing me off balance, causing me to swing both arms wildly in the air trying to regain my balance. Why had I not put on my wader belt? It seemed so useless in the Kinni, where a fall might get you wet, but certainly not take your life! This river had more water going by me in one minute than passed me in a season on a quiet Wisconsin spring creek. I was quartering across the stream, trying to give the current as little purchase on my legs as possible, holding my rod in the upstream hand. I should have picked up one of those long pieces of drift wood on the bank to use as a wading staff, another piece of gear that is only an affectation in the Midwest.

Suddenly, with a sense of certainty that was only moments long, but seemed to last forever, as if in slow motion, I knew I was going to get wet. My back foot slid off the bottom, the downstream foot stabbed blindly at nothingness, and I was being carried downstream, legs first, face out of water. My thought at the moment was not for my safety, but for that gorgeous Heddon cane rod in my left hand. I went through a riffle, getting one terrific blow on my tailbone after another, until I turned on my side and grabbed a passing branch. I hung on as the current filled my waders, eventually overpowering my grip. I sped on into deeper water. It crossed my mind in a peaceful sort of way that no one in the entire world knew where I was at that moment, and that I had always wanted to leave life while fishing... but not this way. Finally the pommeling of the rocks on my back stopped. All at once I felt a terrific sense of serenity, my feet met sand and the current gently stood me upright. As I watched my hat float off into the distance, I removed my wader straps, pulled them down around my thighs and instantly lost about seventy pounds of water. I stood up, walked to shore. I was more than a quarter of a mile below where I had lost my footing. Removing the waders which had a large gash in the seat, I gingerly checked for a corresponding gash in my flesh, but there was only an ache as I stretched on the bank, so I walked hunched over, through the brush, numb and oblivious to the scratches of vegetation, wearing the Borger boots which felt clumsy and too large without the wading socks and waders. The Heddon rod made it through with nary a scratch. Later, when the bus showed up at 9:45, I ignored the funny looks of the pony-tailed male driver that took me, dripping, back to town. He would never have believed I was a guest artist at the Aspen Music Festival. My experience has caused me to reevaluate some things, not all of them to do with trout fishing.

I'm trading in my chest pack on an old vest I have in my closet. I've worn and enjoyed a chest pack for several years now, finding that it's easier on my neck and shoulders than a vest, and I like the minimalist approach rather than carrying everything I own. One fly box, some strike indicators, tippet material, shot, floatant, what more could you want! Well, the chest pack is just fine except in one regard: you can't see your feet through it. You can see to the front of you, to the sides, but not straight down. I know, someone familiar with my physique might say that I couldn't see my feet even *without* the chest pack. I may be big, but I can see the tops of my shoes just fine thank you.

Next, I shall always wear a wader belt, no matter how calm the water may be. It is truly amazing how fast waders can fill and very scary to feel the weight of that water preventing you from rising.

And lastly, I will accept the fact that I am fifty-seven years old, not as spry as I once was, and never try to cross a waist-deep freestone river again, not in good light, not in bad light, not in any light. There'll be no testosterone rush challenging me to pit my macho body in a contest with moving water ever again, unless I'm absolutely sure I can win. That means I will have an unobstructed, clear view of the bottom, be able to see my feet, and spy a fish over there big enough to tempt me to cross in the first place. Oh, one other thing: I'll always let someone know where and when I'm going.

Parker Creek, tributary of the Kinnickinnic River, suffers catastrophic fish kill..

On the morning of May 20, Bruce Foster shook his head in disgust as he bent to retrieve what appeared to be a piece of white plastic in the eddy behind the rock. To his surprise and horror, the object turned out to be the upturned belly of a dead trout, floating in the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic River. Soon he spotted another, and then another. In dismay and with a growing feeling of dread, Foster put his tackle away and quickly called the DNR office in Baldwin. Fish Manager Marty Engel was out of the office at the time, and Bruce's report was investigated by Dave Hausman. Crews quickly confirmed the dead fish and began to search for the source of the poison. About this time, dozens of phone calls from anglers on Parker Creek, several miles from where Foster was fishing, flooded into the DNR office. Tom Artilla did the first surveys of Parker Creek, which seemed to have suffered a major fish kill. Marty Engel arrived back from a trout stream project to find his office alive with activity. On the 27th, the DNR issued the following press release:

"Department of Natural Resources fish crews are evaluating a serious fish kill on Parker Creek, a tributary to the Kinnickinnic River...Anglers had reported hundreds of dead trout downstream on the Kinnickinnic River near Liberty Road about three miles northeast of River Falls. A 300-foot shocking survey at this site found 129 dead brown trout and 106 live brown trout. This section of the Kinnickinnic is quite wide and has slow current velocities. The fish kill started near the headwaters of the south branch of Parker Creek near 18th Avenue where a farm field had recently been spread with liquid manure before a heavy rainfall. Organic material from manure reduces dissolved oxygen in the water, which in combination with ammonia toxicity can kill fish.

On May 20 downstream from the field for approximately 200 yards the stream was discolored and littered with dead fish. On May 21 fish crews shocked sites on Parker Creek near County Trunk J and County Trunk W and found 1 live brown trout and 96 dead brown trout and 3 live brook trout and 32 dead brook trout. In addition, all other fish species, including darters, creek chubs, white suckers, dace and others were dead. Most of the invertebrate life in the stream, such as crayfish and caddis flies, also was destroyed.

Upstream on the Kinnickinnic River from the mouth of Parker Creek conditions on the river were good and no dead fish were found. On May 22 the fish crew surveyed a site closer to the confluence with the Kinnickinnic River and found 4 live brown trout and 411 dead brown trout as well as 4 live brook trout and 8 dead brook trout. This area is an important rearing area for trout and many, if not most, of the young trout were killed. Crews also checked reports that a small number of fish were found dead on the south fork of the Kinnickinnic but no dead fish were found Friday and many live fish were reported. No dead fish were found behind the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

The fish kill on Parker Creek was extensive, probably 99 percent of the fish or more. The kill very seriously affected the brook trout population and recruitment of younger fish because the tributary was an important rearing area. The incident remains under investigation."

How did it happen? Liquid manure was stored at this dairy farm in an underground cesspool. It was pumped directly, through a six inch hose pulled by a tractor, onto the farmer's 70 acres. About 600,000 gallons were spread, what agricultural sources call a normal amount. The dry run that becomes Parker Creek runs through the fields, and the hose was dragged through and over the dry run. The manure was spread over the previous weekend, finishing on Tuesday the 19th. Heavy rains occurred on Monday night, when two inches fell in the area, transforming the dry run into a rushing stream. When freshly spread, the stuff is quite slick, and farmers prefer to let it sit on top of the soil for four to five days before 'knifing' it in. Before the manure is incorporated into the soil, it is susceptible to being washed out of the fields by heavy rains. As far as is known, this is what happened on the banks of Parker Creek. What of the farmer who owns the fields? The St. Croix County District Attorney, Eric Johnson, will decide whether to prosecute, after hearing input from the DNR. Perhaps he will be forced to contribute to cleanup costs, but that is undecided at the moment. The farmer had several days to decide what his story would be when questioned by DNR officials. It seemed to some observers that the intensity of the fish kill suggested that more than the correct amount of fertilizer was used. It is unclear at this point whether DNR did any post mortems on fish to actually pinpoint their cause of death. Might it have been a pesticide spill as well as too much liquid manure?

(Continued from pg. 4)

The Kinnickinnic Priority Watershed, which was funded this Spring by the Wisconsin legislature, would have mandated a buffer zone of vegetation between the river and a cultivated field. A Federal program is available to pay farmers to take buffer strips, usually 66 feet in width, out of production along the stream. Neither of these programs helped. The Priority Watershed project is in the formative stages, far from setting up rules for buffer zones, and the landowner didn't take advantage of the Federal program.

The bottom line is that a significant loss to a trout population occurred, but Nature will repopulate the stream with both fish and invertebrates, the spring sources of Parker Creek were not damaged, and the main flow of the Kinnickinnic was only affected in a minor way. What is perhaps more important in the long run is the kind of response which Trout Unlimited and other conservation organizations make to this event.

Some feel that farmers are not careful enough, that they have historically seen moving water as a source for irrigation, a place for livestock to cool off on a hot day, or a convenient sewer for barnyard waste. This righteously indignant faction wants stiff penalties for accidental or intentional water pollution, strict regulation of agricultural practices, and mandatory education to 'raise the consciousness' of those who live next to trout streams.

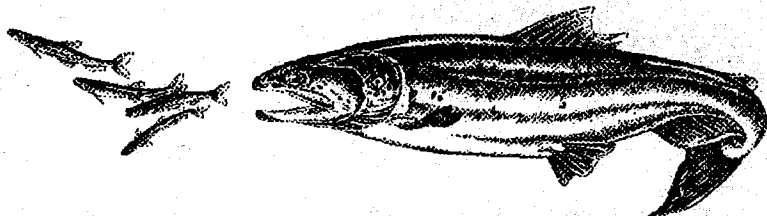
There are those who feel that trout streams will best be protected by a coalition of landowners and concerned citizens where information is presented without confrontation, and riparian practices are arrived at by consensus. This is the goal of the Kinnickinnic Priority Watershed program. This process is slow but shows great promise for success.

These voices both peaceful and strident arise from a significant change in the demographics of the Kinnickinnic valley. The agribusiness lobby has been virtually unchallenged in rural areas of Wisconsin. Pierce and St. Croix counties are still viewed by some as dairy land, far away from the metropolis of Madison, on the far outskirts of a large and basically rural state. At one time, there were eight mills grinding wheat on the banks of the Kinnickinnic. In the 1880's there were dams and diversions, lots of sewer effluent, no trout, no trees. Now there is only one dam left, and I may live long enough to see that one removed, finally restoring a cataract to River Falls. In the 1950's, 75% of the income of Pierce county residents was produced from agriculture. In 1997, only 12% came from that source. The two counties bordering Minnesota are inextricably bound to the suburban sprawl of Minneapolis and St. Paul, as unpalatable as that fact may be to some residents. The future is not in agriculture, but in a diverse, service and light industrial economy. In light of this, shouldn't Trout Unlimited finally be able to stand up to long-entrenched but now marginal agribusiness interests?

A more pressing concern is surely rampant, uncontrolled development and the resultant thermal pollution problems which could potentially be far more damaging than an accidental toxic spill. Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter succeeded in getting a Storm Water Plan adopted by the city of River Falls to protect the Kinni from fatal temperature spikes caused by runoff of superheated rainwater from hot parking lots and roads. It maintains electronic sensors to monitor water quality and temperature along many miles of the river. It is producing a documentary video to point out the problems and potential solutions for rivers threatened by improper land use. The Kinnickinnic River Land Trust has secured conservation easements from riparian landowners to protect the valley and its ecosystem from congested and dangerous development. All these measures bode well for the future of this fantastic river.

Environmental groups concerned with the Kinnickinnic River will surely use this unfortunate event to raise public concern over the fragility of this beautiful river and its trout population. Perhaps the Parker Creek spill will motivate both Wisconsin and National Trout Unlimited to discuss new and innovative response strategies when cold water resources are threatened in the future.

Skip James





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RIP-RAP EDITOR

DEADLINES

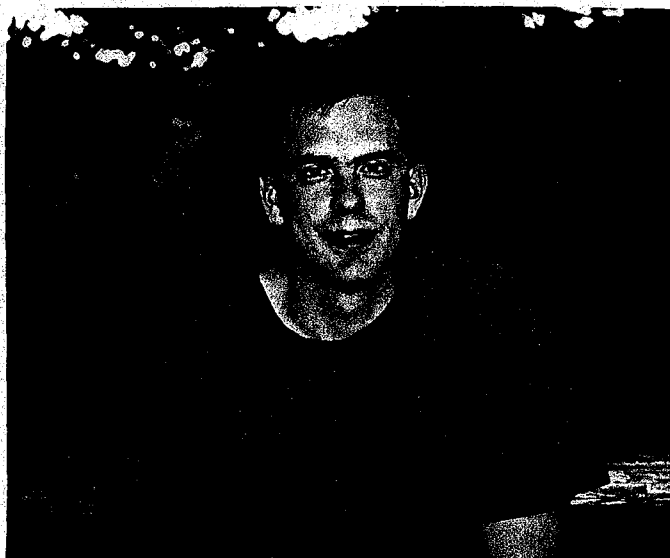
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Oct. 9/15/98

Visit our Website for Stream Reports and Conservation News
<http://www.spacestar.com/users/lambcom/kiap.html>

Brent Sittlow

Our new chapter President...



Here's Brent's smiling face for those of you who haven't met him. Introduce yourself to him at the September meeting. Thanks again to Tony Stifter for his leadership. Now that you'll be living in Minnesota, Tony, will you root for the Vikings? How will it feel to buy a non-resident fishing license in Wisconsin? Will Trudy become a Walleye dog instead of a Trout dog?