

# HEADWATERS

Winter 2008, Vol. 8, #1



## Pollution Alert—Western Maryland Streams in Trouble!

by Ken Pavol

### **Aaron's Run acid mine drainage mitigation project**

Aaron's Run is a tributary to the Savage River tailwater. It enters the Savage less than a mile from the confluence of the Savage and the North Branch of the Potomac. Water quality in Aaron's Run is affected by acid mine drainage (AMD) pollution from old strip mines, and its flow affects water quality in the Savage. The result is a measurable reduction of trout in the affected area of the Savage.

The Maryland Bureau of Mines (BOM) has obtained a 100K grant from the Eastern Brook Trout Venture (EBTV) for use in an AMD mitigation project on the Aaron's Run watershed. 75K will be used for stream restoration and 25K for passive AMD treatment systems.

The EBTV grant will be part of a larger effort to address AMD problems in the Aaron's Run watershed that will cost about \$1,000,000. Two of the worst AMD sources are located on the Owens' property. Construction design on the first problem area is complete. Owens' south will be completed in 2008. Both projects will utilize passive AMD treatment systems to treat AMD seeps that the BOM describes as "hot," or highly acidic.

The other problem in the Aaron's Run watershed is located on the Wassle property. This work, planned for Fall 2008, will include stream stabilization on Aaron's Run, passive AMD treatment, as well as a lime doser.

### **George's Creek McDonald Seep**

A quality trout fishery, with plenty of large trout, existed in the North Branch downstream of Westernport beginning in 2001. The trout population was supported primarily through a DNR fingerling trout stocking program, but a number of wild brown trout were also present.

The fishery changed in 2005, coincident with severe acid mine drainage pollution that developed in George's Creek at the site of the "McDonald seep."

Up until that time, the McDonald seep was being effectively treated with a small lime doser deployed and maintained by the BOM.



Photo: Ken Pavol

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## Winter Trout Fishing in Maryland

by Jay Sheppard

It may be snowing and bitter cold, but if a fisherman wants to brave the elements, he or she will find trout willing to take a lure or fly somewhere in Maryland. One of my fondest memories is walking on two feet of snow on the banks of the Gunpowder with the air and water temps both about 40° and catching trout on tiny dry flies. (The Gunpowder has a particularly prolific hatch of little black stoneflies in late January and February.)

There are three tailwaters in western and one in central Maryland that are always fishable in the dead of winter (from west to east): the Youghiogheny, the North Branch of the Potomac at Barnum, the lower Savage, and the Gunpowder.

Patomac-Patuxent TU (PPTU) is trying to develop a fishery below Brighton Dam on the Patuxent, but the flows of late have not been sufficient to sustain holdover trout.

Beaver Creek, located in Washington County is our largest limestone spring creek. Other spring creeks in Baltimore County, such as Jones Falls and Bee Tree Run can also be fished during the cold months. None of these freeze over in winter, although their banks may be icy. Studded boots are a help.

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## View from the Chairman

by Noel Gollehon

Greetings fellow anglers and TU members. I hope your 2008 resolution is to fish more! This issue of *Headwaters* contains information that will help you choose places to fish and make you aware of some of the issues you find.

The big news about MD trout in the summer of 2007 was the aggressive approach taken by MAC-TU to address the spread of Whirling Disease in the State. MAC-TU partnered with—and in some cases led—Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in efforts to halt the spread of Whirling Disease (WD). (See the back page of this newsletter on how **you** can stop the spread of WD.)

MAC-TU, with the support of TU National, met with DNR

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Jay Sheppard has guided on Maryland rivers and streams for more than two decades. He is also an active leader in the Maryland Trout Unlimited chapter.

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**Winter Fishing**

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The best time for winter fishing weather is on a warm, cloudy day. The air temperatures need only get 5°–8°F warmer than the air temperatures of the previous week or so. There is no need to be on the water at the crack of dawn; the warmest water temperatures are in mid-afternoon, and will incite hatches and spur the trout to eat. If possible, avoid clear skies and brisk winds.

Fishermen should dress for the possibility of getting cold and wet. Gloves that stay warm after getting wet and expose the index finger and

thumb for tying knots and handling line are a must. I use breathable waders all year long, although they have no insulation. In winter, I wear ordinary sweat pants under my regular pants. These enable me to stand in freezing water for several hours at a stretch. An extra pair of socks, a wool cap, and a good jacket with layers underneath complete my outfit.

Flies and lures must be retrieved at a much slower rate than when the water is above 40°–45°. Trout simply do not move as fast or as

far in colder water. Hanging a fly or lure in the current in front of a deep drop-off or heavy cover can elicit a strike. Midges and small winter stoneflies are the only consistent dry fly action one can expect. Small nymphs are always a great choice. On Beaver Creek, cress bugs work well.

Do not get too far from your car or other refuge should you fall into the stream. Hypothermia is a real killer. Be patient—the trout are in no hurry to eat in cold weather.➤

**Message from the (new) Editor**

*by Ann McIntosh*

Like many other TU volunteers statewide, I have assumed my position as the editor of *Headwaters* under the urging of James Gracie.

As most readers know, Jim has been the President of TU national, the catalyst to the Gunpowder Falls trout restoration, and no one, including me, can resist his call to arms.

I am pleased by Jim's invitation and of his colleagues on MAC-TU to become the new editor of *Headwaters*.

As your editor, I must repeat the perennial request of volunteer organizations everywhere: This is *your* newsletter, Please send your contribution to me—or tell me your thoughts about issues you would like to see addressed in in your newsletter.

This issue—the first under my editorship, is missing at least one very important component: Reports from chapters.

**Presidents or officers in chapters:** Please send me 200-300 words for the next issue of *Headwaters* describing your primary concerns, efforts, or successes/challenges. I am not looking for long feature-length articles.

I am also seeking articles that fill the following categories:

- Specific reports on how, when and where to fish MD streams and other waters close to MD, and VA streams (i.e., Shenandoah Park), or PA streams (i.e., Yellow Breeches, Letort, Falling Spring).
- Also in the next issue I will initiate a column tentatively titled:

*"Budget Angling A-Field: Inexpensive Fishing Outside the Mid-Atlantic Region".*

My preferred way to receive contributions to *Headwaters* is via e-mail to: [annmac20@aol.com](mailto:annmac20@aol.com).

Please provide the document in Microsoft Word format.➤

**The Deadline  
for the Summer  
Newsletter is**

**May 1, 2008**

**See above for  
submission information**

## Whirling Disease Update

by Ken Pavol

MD DNR Fisheries Service provided the following update on the status of whirling disease management efforts as of 10/15/06.

### **Facilities**

- Bear Creek, Mettiki and Jennings Randolph net pens remain closed.
- Bear Creek raceways have been disinfected, Raceways 1-6 have been sealed and relined.
- Contracts are being negotiated for removal and disposal of sediments from the Bear Creek settling pond. This will remove the last bit of possible habitat for the intermediate host of the parasite, the Tubifex worm.
- The pond will be redesigned to facilitate periodic removal of sediment and minimize potential for Tubifex colonization. A deep pit mine site near Sand Spring Run (Georges Creek) has been chosen for disposal of the sediments. The material will be mixed with flyash containing a high percentage of free lime. It will be buried under multiple layers of this material as this site is reclaimed.

### **Public Information**

- Display boxes were constructed to hold informational signs on the Yough, North Branch of the Potomac, and the Savage River.
- Angler/boater information cards were printed and made available to the public (See back page). This information card will be modified to cover all diseases and invasive species for tidal and non-tidal waters and will be added to the 2008 Sportfishing Guide.
- Fisheries Service Web page has current advice to anglers to prevent spread of whirling disease and specific advice on precautions regarding felt waders.
- Maryland Public Television has been filming footage of personnel, facilities, sampling and stocking as part of a future Outdoors Maryland segment that will discuss whirling disease, to be aired in 2008.
- Presentations were made to TU groups, the DNR Invasive Species Matrix Team and staff regarding whirling disease as an invasive problem.
- Staff shared information with Whirling Disease Initiative at Montana State University and was asked to participate in the national symposium, if it occurs.

### **Adult Fish Sampling**

- Little Bear Creek below Bear Creek hatchery, Hunting Creek elbow pool & Hemlock Bridge, Cushwa's adult brown and rainbow trout, Bear Creek, Fike's Run below Bear Creek, and Gunpowder Falls Dam Falls Station all tested negative. Samples are pending for Folly Run in Garrett County, and North Branch Potomac River lower C&R.

### **Sentinel Testing**

Sentinel testing involves exposure of swim-up fry in cages in stream for at least a two-week period and then tested using PCR technology. June 2007 testing in Western MD showed only the North Branch of the Potomac in the natural propagation area and the upper C&R section as positive.

Samplers are currently out in Bear Creek, Cushwa's Rearing station, Hoyes Run, Deep Creek Lake tailrace, Lower Savage River and North Branch Potomac River lower Catch and Release area below Blue Hole, and Youghiogheny River DH area. ➤

## Fishery Management Reform Act of 2007

TU, in an alliance along with the other organizations in the MD Aquatic Resource Coalition supported SB 1012—the Fisheries Management Reform Act.

The act increased license fees for recreational fishermen—raising \$2.5 million for the Fisheries Service, and requesting the Governor to match the license fee increase with a 50% general fund revenue addition.

The Act also set up a task force and peer review group to review overall fisheries management policies. It will make recommendations for modernizing and streamlining fishery management.

TU, the MD Bass Federation, the MD Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association and others are represented on the Task Force.

Jim Gracie represented the perspective of TU in the effort. The task force had its first meeting in November 2007. Visit the Web site for the results of that meeting. ➤

### **Chairman**

*Continued from page 1*

leadership to request a change in DNR operations: Stop raising and stocking trout infected with WD. DNR agreed with TU and stopped the practice! TU also assisted DNR by arranging for nationally recognized scientific experts to assist in planning the DNR monitoring and cleanup efforts.

At this time, the outcome of TU's and DNR's efforts to limit the further spread are unknown. Monitoring efforts will continue in 2008 to determine the scope of the infestation.

While we all have the ability to speak individually on state management and regulation issues, your voice is amplified when the 2,000+ members of MAC-TU offer their collective voice. MAC-TU is your magnified voice for coldwater conservation issues in Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic region.

In this issue of *Headwaters*, MAC-TU brings your voice to issues of stream health, brook trout habitat, stream improvement, whitewater releases, power plant operations, and development of the future of our sport.

If you say, 'the articles do not represent my view,' then ask yourself ... have you conveyed your opinion to your chapter president, MAC-TU, or its delegates? Have you attended a MAC-TU meeting (or a recent chapter meeting)? *Have you become involved?*

The relaunch of *Headwaters* and the Web site (www.mac-tu.org) represents an attempt by MAC-TU to improve communication, but we need help from you (see Editor's message). Ann and I hope you enjoy this issue of *Headwaters* and will regularly check the Web site for updated information. May you have stretched tippets and solid knots in 2008! ➤

## The Maryland Brook Trout Alliance—Update

by James Gracie

Trout Unlimited is involved in a program to restore and enhance brook trout habitat in Maryland, and throughout the east. Inspired by the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBJV), a national initiative of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife (IAFW) agencies, the coalition was formed out of a meeting of interested persons who responded to an invitation to discuss the status of brook trout in the eastern U.S.

There are five genetically distinct populations of eastern brook trout in Maryland. These exist in the Youghiogheny and the Savage watershed, and the Monocacy river, as well as the Gunpowder and the Susquehanna. All brook trout are in jeopardy—with the exception of the Savage population which is in good condition.

The Savage watershed hosts the most extensive, intact, interconnected brook trout population in the state. It may be one of the healthiest brook trout streams south of Maine.

In the first meeting of the EBJV, facilitated by John Fritts, the participants formed four watershed organizations focused on the preservation and restoration of brook trout populations in four watersheds in Maryland.

In 2007, the Maryland Brook Trout Alliance (MBTA) agreed upon a structure and adopted articles of association and by-laws. Each watershed group has a representatives on the Board of Directors of the MBTA: Neil Jacobs—Youghiogheny; Laura Haynes—Savage; Jim Guilford—Catoctin, Antietam, Monocacy Brook Trout Initiative (CAMBI) and Martin Eisman—Gunpowder.

The Savage Watershed Association (SWA) filed articles of incorporation and applied for 501(c)(3) status as a charitable and educational organization. It also applied for and received a VISTA grant and have a staff person to help with their project on Aaron's Run, a tributary to the Savage impacted by acid mine drainage.



Photo: Douglas Lees

See Brookie on page 5

## Wild Pacific Salmon Alert

Alan Moore and Joseph Bogaard of the TU office in Portland, OR are working together to reach out to leaders from across the country to ask for help on a national comment drive on behalf of endangered wild salmon and steelhead in the Pacific Northwest.

For nearly 15 years, TU and Save Our Wild Salmon have worked closely together to restore healthy fisheries in the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Once home to the world's greatest salmon and steelhead populations, Columbia basin is now home to 13 officially threatened and endangered stocks. As stocks decline, fishing opportunities of course decline too.

TU, Save Our Wild Salmon, and a broad coalition of organizations and businesses are working together to generate tens of thousands of comments directed toward federal agencies and our elected leaders in support of science-based salmon recovery in the Columbia Basin.

After 15 years of failure, and more than \$7 billion in taxpayer dollars, we have not recovered a single stock. The situation has gotten so bad that just four Snake River sockeye survived to return to their spawning grounds at Redfish Lake in Idaho.

### **A not-so-new federal salmon plan**

On October 31, NOAA-Fisheries released its sixth salmon plan for the Columbia Basin. Four of the last five have been rejected as illegal by the courts. This "new" plan will be anything but new.

Over the next several months and before the Final Plan is released, TU leadership is working hard to educate the public about the "new" plan and encourage them to help us generate tens of thousands of public comments.

Visit the campaign Web site at: <http://www.giveadamfor-salmon.org> There is a lot of great information, and a page to submit public comments.

TU will be delivering these comments in early 2008 to the Administration, Members of Congress, and Presidential candidates. In order to make an impact, we need many thousands of people weighing in.

With its many key players in Congress, the mid-Atlantic region is really important for our salmon recovery campaign. Wild Pacific salmon are an irreplaceable national treasure.

*All TU members:* Please go to the website and find out how to educate your leaders and members about the plight of Columbia and Snake River salmon and steelhead, and to encourage them to submit their comments. 🐟

**Brookie***continued from page 4*

The Gunpowder group led by Martin Eisman and Nick Weber has begun an effort to improve habitat on Walker and Silver Runs, two brook trout streams that flow into the Gunpowder River upstream of Prettyboy Reservoir.

The lower end of these two watersheds may need tree planting to restore shade and habitat, and there are several ponds in the watersheds that discharge hot water. Studies of flow and temperature were begun the summer of 2007 to help determine design parameters for moderating the summer water temperatures.

The Gunpowder group is also pursuing the restoration of the dam on Bush Cabin Run which served as a barrier keeping brown trout from migrating into this brook trout tributary. The dam was damaged in a flood several years ago and needs repair.

In addition, the Gunpowder coalition has been approached by landowners in the Slade Run and Councilman's Run watersheds that are interested in restoring brook trout to these streams which have been taken over by brown trout.

The Youghiogheny Watershed Association is involved in several projects including a bank stabilization project on Crabtree Run—an outstanding brook trout stream in Garrett County. ➤

**Pollution***continued from page 1*

In one day—during August 2005—water quality from the McDonald seep deteriorated. Acidity increased by a factor of ten, while flow increased to three-times the prior volume. This in an AMD source that was already producing the worst water quality in Maryland.

All fish died in the four miles of George's Creek downstream to the North Branch. Later, rain increased flow in George's Creek to several hundred cfs, while the Army Corps of Engineers withheld water at Jennings Randolph and Savage River dams. Thus, the relatively undiluted pollution from George's Creek traveled down the North Branch, leaving toxic aluminum in white deposits on rocks for miles downstream.

An adequate lime doser and the capture and removal of metals from the pollution site are required to address the problem. The technology exists but adequate funding is lacking. The efficiency of the lime dosing effort at the McDonald seep has been increased and pH in George's Creek has improved.

However, the metals, which are in solution, precipitate as pH is increased above about 4.5. Under low-flow conditions, most of the iron is deposited on the substrate of George's Creek, smothering the invertebrate community. When it rains and the flow increases, the dissolved metals are mobilized and flow downstream, eventually entering the North Branch.

*Photo: Ken Pavol*

Although progress has been made in terms of improved water chemistry, the huge metal loading persists with no real solution or commitment by MD Department of the Environment (MDE) to address the problem.

MAC-TU contacted MDE urging a commitment to address the AMD pollution at the McDonald seep. Although MDE has responded, they have yet to commit to an overall strategy that will address all aspects of the problem.

**North Branch of the Potomac**

Prior to 2003, the Army Corp of Engineers (COE) operated the Jennings Randolph Dam (JRD) in a manner that supported trout management. In 2003, the COE constructed a bathing beach on the shore of Jennings Randolph Lake.

Without seeking public input, the COE changed the lake levels in the summer to support the new beach. The lake level for August 15 was increased ten feet—from 1445' to 1455'—withholding 8,000 acre feet of water from previous summer out-flow levels, reducing the average flow in the hottest months, and elevating water temperatures downstream.

The result has been a significant reduction of trout habitat downstream of JRD. The COE's flow management from JRD in 2007 reduced

that area by at least 10 river miles.

The COE currently contends that they cannot be responsible for temperature maintenance downstream and that it is not a water quality issue. Nonetheless, their flow management prior to the beach construction resulted in a quality trout fishery downstream.

Water temperature is clearly a water quality component. Sixteen billion gallons of water in JR Lake are designated for water quality enhancement (the other 13 billion gallons are allocated for downstream water supply). No water storage is allocated specifically for beach maintenance (or any other recreational activity).

One potential bright spot is the effort underway by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) to develop a computer model of the North Branch watershed. The ICPRB claims the computer model will be designed to better manage releases with regard to all stakeholders (anglers, guides, white-water boaters, outfitters, and the beachgoers) as well as the designated project purposes.

Trout Unlimited is actively engaged in a dialog with the COE regarding this issue through TU's representation on the North Branch Advisory Group. TU, MD DNR and organized fishing guides are working together to support an outcome that protects the trout resource in the North Branch. ➤



## **ATTENTION ANGLERS & BOATERS**

To prevent the spread of **WHIRLING DISEASE** and **INVASIVE SPECIES** in Maryland waters, please take the following precautions:

- **Scrub all gear to remove mud and plants; rinse with clean water**
- **If possible, dry equipment completely**
- **Drain ALL water from bilges and livewells – DO NOT move water from one area to another**
- **Do NOT move fish, fish parts, harvested bait fish, or any other live bait from one water body to another**
- **Do NOT dump live or cut bait**
- **Dispose of fish or fish parts in garbage, or burn**
- **If possible, refrain from using felts on your wading boots. If you have felt soles, ALLOW TO DRY COMPLETELY before moving to another water body**

**For further information, contact Maryland Fisheries Service at  
[www.dnr.maryland.gov](http://www.dnr.maryland.gov) or call 1-877-620-8DNR x8265**