



## Vermont Council

Clean Water Day  
February 22, 2018  
Testimony before  
Vermont House  
Natural Resources,  
Fish and Wildlife  
Committee

Thanks to the Committee for allowing comments to strongly support efforts to acknowledge the crucial importance of clean water to Vermont's health, economy, history and recreation. I am here today representing the 2000 Vermonters who are members of the America's most prominent cold water conservation organization, Trout Unlimited(TU). Nationally Trout Unlimited has over 300,000 members and a professional staff of over 200. The mission of TU is to conserve protect and restore North America's cold water fisheries and watersheds. In Vermont our mission is to conserve, protect and restore Vermont's cold water fisheries and watersheds.

I'd like to share some facts about Vermont TU and the projects we are involved with and how we work with youth and attempt to influence policy to benefit clean water and fishing. Vermont TU is unique in Vermont among groups working to protect cold, clean fishable waters. We are solely a volunteer organization. There is no paid professional staff. We manage ourselves, raise funds and nurture the growth of Vermont TU.

In 2017 Vermont Trout Unlimited's volunteers from 5 TU Chapters across the state committed 13,481 hours to our mission. In fulfilling our mission to conserve, protect, reconnect and restore Vermont's cold water fisheries and watersheds TU volunteers:

Continued to organize and expand TU's "Trout in the Classroom" program, which is now in over 80 elementary and middle schools across the state. Students learn about the importance of clean water to the health of trout they raise in their classroom and then release into a nearby cold water stream.

VT TU volunteers worked on 25 miles of stream-side riparian improvement projects. Volunteers planted thousands of trees and shrubs along rivers and streams to help re-establish the important buffer essential to healthy streams and clean water. One project example is from last October on the Dog River in Berlin, VT where VT TU organized over 300 Montpelier High School students and faculty who then planted thousands of trees and shrubs to revitalize the rivers riparian zone.

VT TU also worked with partners as a team to help re-connect rivers and streams through culvert replacements and in East Burke, Vermont was involved in removing an old and decaying dam to re-connect the East Branch of the Passumpsic and open up over 90 miles of habitat. This spring the important work of re-planting the riparian zone on and near this old dam site begins.

Vermont Trout Unlimited ran its 7th Vermont Trout Camp for Teens at Jackson Lodge in Canaan, Vermont. This 5 day program teaches the importance of cold water conservation and teaches fishing skills from tying trout flies, fly fishing, stream side entomology and students participate in a riparian planting project.

Vermont TU members also participate in and help support the work of other groups connected to fishing and recreation like, for example Casting for Recovery which helps cancer survivors recover by teaching them about outdoor recreation and fly fishing. Volunteers also helped with Project Healing Waters which helps veterans recover from injuries and traumatic experiences through engaging in fly fishing and learning skills of the sport.

Vermont TU actively seeks out landowners who know about the importance of clean water and thriving riparian zones. We then partner with them to work on their river banks to help establish riparian zones and protect their banks from erosion. One example is the Rogers Farm in Berlin where the owners are setting aside 50 foot buffer zones, where a thriving riparian zone is returning.

VT TU also actively connects with state and national fish and wildlife departments and the Vermont Agency for Natural Resources to advocate for policies and regulations to support the cold water fisheries of the State of Vermont. TU is currently advocating for more emphasis on protecting and expanding wild trout fisheries, especially the states cold water fish, the brook trout. We are also seeking to expand Outstanding Resource Waters in Vermont to enhance and protect cold water fish and streams.

We in Vermont TU are proud of the work and projects accomplished, the youth we help teach and miles of stream we have protected, conserved, re-connected and restored.

However, we are also dismayed at what appears to be a lack of will to further clean up Vermont's waters! Vermont TU has the will and the passion to continue our all volunteer effort. We will never give up! We love the resource and joy it brings us as we fish with flies, lures and bait in our states rivers, lakes and streams. We expect the same passion from the Vermont State legislature and from the Governor!

You have the power to invest heavily in clean water! Vermont TU will do all it can with all the skilled and passionate partners and landowners we work with to turn those investments into clean, cold and fishable water!

Respectfully submitted by,

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