

Round UP

FOR IA DRIFTLESS TROUT UNLIMITED BEGINS APRIL 17

Annual TU fundraiser is April 29 at Hotel Winneshiek

Oneota Co-op shoppers are invited to “Round Up at the Register” for IA Driftless Trout Unlimited Monday, April 17 through Monday, May 1. This nonprofit is funded through donations, and while contributions are gladly accepted throughout the year, IA Driftless TU does hold an annual fundraising event each spring. This year’s event is Saturday, April 29, 6pm, at Hotel Winneshiek (Steyer Opera House) in downtown Decorah. IA Driftless TU is a 2023 Flying Film Tour (F3T) host. Event tickets are \$20 and include admission to a film and appetizer buffet fee. Tickets must be purchased online at the F3T website (<https://flyfilmtour.myeventscenter.com/event/Decorah-ia-lowa-Driftless-Chapter-Of-Trout-72887>). Event guests also may enjoy a cash bar and chance to take home a variety of raffle prizes. Those unable to attend the event may still support IA Driftless TU and be entered to win prizes (including the grand prize). Raffle tickets may be purchased on the organization’s Square page (<https://square.link/u/woy1P9cc>).

Please watch the Co-op’s social media and the CommPost e-newsletter for information regarding IA Driftless TU tabling (with fly tying!) during their Round Up at the Register event. We chatted recently with IA Driftless Trout Unlimited to learn more about the efforts of this education and conservation-minded nonprofit. A Co-op Q&A is below:

OCC: What is Trout Unlimited? When was our local chapter started?

IA Driftless Trout Unlimited (TU): Founded in Michigan in 1959, Trout Unlimited today is a national nonprofit organization with 300,000 members and supporters. These individuals are dedicated to conserving, protecting and restoring North America’s coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. Trout Unlimited has grown tremendously since 16 fisherfolk gathered at the home of George Griffith on the banks of Michigan’s Au Sable River many years ago. Our local Iowa Driftless Chapter of TU was founded over 20 years ago and has been working in northeast Iowa ever since.

OCC: What area does our local chapter specifically represent?

IA Driftless TU: The Iowa Driftless Chapter of Trout Unlimited is one of three Iowa chapters. It represents northeast Iowa; occasionally we have supported projects on cold water fisheries statewide. Our current projects over the next year or so are focused primarily in Winneshiek County.

OCC: Please tell us about current Driftless TU projects:

IA Driftless TU: All the projects we support are located on streams with permanent public fishing access. The current Casey Springs Creek project exists to support a population of native brook trout in this coldwater stream located at the 18-acre Sindelar Wildlife Access six miles northwest of Decorah. These improvements will benefit the in-stream brook trout habitat, reconnect the stream with its floodplain and improve public access for fishing.

We also are currently fundraising for the second phase of the North Bear Creek project in northern Winneshiek County. This project also includes in-stream habitat improvements as well as bank shaping to help reduce erosion on the stream corridor.



IA Driftless TU volunteers work together with Iowa DNR on a fish sampling survey, Casey Springs Creek.



TU’s Tom Murray of Decorah (on right) chats with participants at one of the organization’s many educational events.

OCC: How are priorities established regarding project direction?

IA Driftless TU: Our chapter works very closely with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The projects we support are typically developed and prioritized by the Iowa DNR, but often the projects with broad partner support are the ones that move forward from the planning and design phases into construction.

OCC: What are some of IA Driftless TU's educational efforts?

IA Driftless TU: Our organization is founded on three pillars which drive everything we do: conversation, education and increasing public fishing access. Our members participate annually in numerous outreach and education events. These include stream cleanups, volunteering at "Kids' Fishing Days," supporting the introduction of fly fishing at Luther College, and volunteering at events hosted by partner organizations such as Winneshiek County Conservation.

OCC: What is "TU DARE" and how does it relate to IA Driftless Trout Unlimited?

IA Driftless TU: TU DARE stands for the Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort. This is the term for joint efforts between the multi-state organization Driftless Area Restoration Effort (DARE) and TU. This partnership is critically important to leverage the maximum resources available to support our efforts, and their involvement in Iowa is a major milestone. Credit is due to the Iowa DNR and the Iowa Coldwater Conservation (ICC) for the relationships they were able to cultivate to bring TU DARE to Iowa. The initial phase of the North Bear project, which was constructed in summer/fall 2022, was the first administered by TU DARE in the state of Iowa.

OCC: How is IA Driftless TU funded? And how may readers participate?

IA Driftless TU: Our chapter relies entirely on the support of volunteers and volunteer donations. Our fundraising efforts support our mission of conservation, education and public fishing access. The best way to get involved is to keep an eye on our Facebook page where we routinely post about upcoming volunteer and engagement opportunities (<https://facebook.com/iadriftless.org>). Individuals and organizations also may support our chapter financially by making a tax deductible donation on our Square page (<https://square.link/u/UKxnGLyY>).

Oneota Co-op round up campaigns are intrinsically tied to the Co-op's community service commitment as outlined in the Co-op Missions and Ends statement. Co-op shoppers are provided the opportunity to round up to the nearest dollar to support this organizational end, which reads as follows:

Oneota Community Co-op Organizational End number seven: "Our members are diverse and engaged, working together and sharing time, energy, and resources to build a resilient and thriving local community."

Blog compiled by Tanya O'Connor, marketing and outreach



All are welcome to a spring clean up Saturday, April 15. See IA Driftless TU's Facebook account for details on seasonal clean up days throughout the year.