



TROUT UNLIMITED POTOMAC FISHERY RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

Improving the environment through brook trout habitat

PROJECT GOALS

Strengthen brook trout populations in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia along tributaries of the Potomac River by restoring riparian buffers and degraded in-stream habitat to reconnect headwater populations.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Increased fishing opportunities for the community.
- Developed three continuing education courses on trout stream ecology and restoration.
- Provided learning opportunities to the community through an in-stream habitat restoration demonstration project at Seneca Rocks Discovery Center.
- Increased food production with pasture, riparian, and wetland BMPs.
- Improved grazing management on over 300 farms.
- Installed 25 alternative watering systems to provide water to livestock.
- Created 20 fish-friendly crossings to maintain livestock access to grazing areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Restored 25 miles of stream.
- Protected more than 100 miles of stream habitat.
- Restored over 500 acres of riparian habitat.
- Protected over 1,000 acres of riparian forest habitat.
- Added trees along riverbanks, which reduced water temperatures and increased shade.
- Reduced streambank erosion and sediment runoff.
- Reconnected over 20 miles of headwaters by mitigating five barriers to fish passage.
- Increased the amount of healthy habitats, which improved water and air quality.
- Added healthy vegetation that improved water filtration.



A restored section of Whitehorn Creek, a tributary of the South Branch Potomac River, flows through farmland used to graze cattle near Moyers, West Virginia. The landowner worked with Trout Unlimited on the project, which improves habitat for fish like the native brook trout. (Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program)

CONSERVATION PROJECTS INSTALLED

- Alternative off-stream water sources.
- Riparian buffers.
- Armored stream crossings.
- Agricultural exclusion fencing.
- In-stream habitat restoration.
- Structures to encourage fish passage.

“ Trout Unlimited and our partners are working with public and private landowners to restore watersheds from the top to the bottom, truly at the watershed scale. These efforts could not be accomplished without the mutual alignment of restoration goals and the dedicated folks that help put this work on the ground. These projects are directly providing benefits to the communities, the fish, the farms and the ecosystems we are restoring.

- **Dustin Wichterman**

Potomac Headwaters Project Leader, Trout Unlimited

PROJECT SUMMARY

To strengthen the native brook trout population along the Potomac River, Trout Unlimited staff engaged public and private landowners through one-on-one meetings to improve area fishing opportunities. The meetings emphasized how certain conservation practices would benefit their land and the river, explained how to further engage with their neighbors and discussed the landowners' goals for their properties. Trout Unlimited staff helped landowners install stream crossings; install exclusion fencing; and plant trees to help stabilize stream banks, keep water temperatures cool and improve fishing opportunities, while still providing livestock with access to water. They also helped install projects that enhanced the in-stream habitat for brook trout spawning, refuge seeking and foraging. Perched culverts and undersized bridges were replaced with fish and vehicle friendly structures. Livestock lands improved, eroding streambanks were restored, the trout population rebounded. More than 1,000 local volunteers, including landowners, anglers and community members, participated in the project.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Creating successful projects require connecting with landowners, maintaining a presence in the community, and building trust.
- Learning how land and water are linked helps people understand the connection between the environment and their daily lives.
- Having realistic expectations and communicating with the community throughout the project will minimize surprises. Mistakes will happen!
- Caring for nature is caring for the economy, as anglers will travel from outside the area to visit protected and pristine destination waters.

THE PARTNERS AND FUNDING SOURCES

- Trout Unlimited
- U.S. Forest Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
- West Virginia Division of Forestry
- West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
- West Virginia Department of Agriculture
- West Virginia Conservation Agency
- Potomac Valley Conservation District
- Eastern Panhandle Conservation District
- Dominion Foundation
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area
- Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture
- Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust

CONTACT

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Chesapeake Bay Program
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