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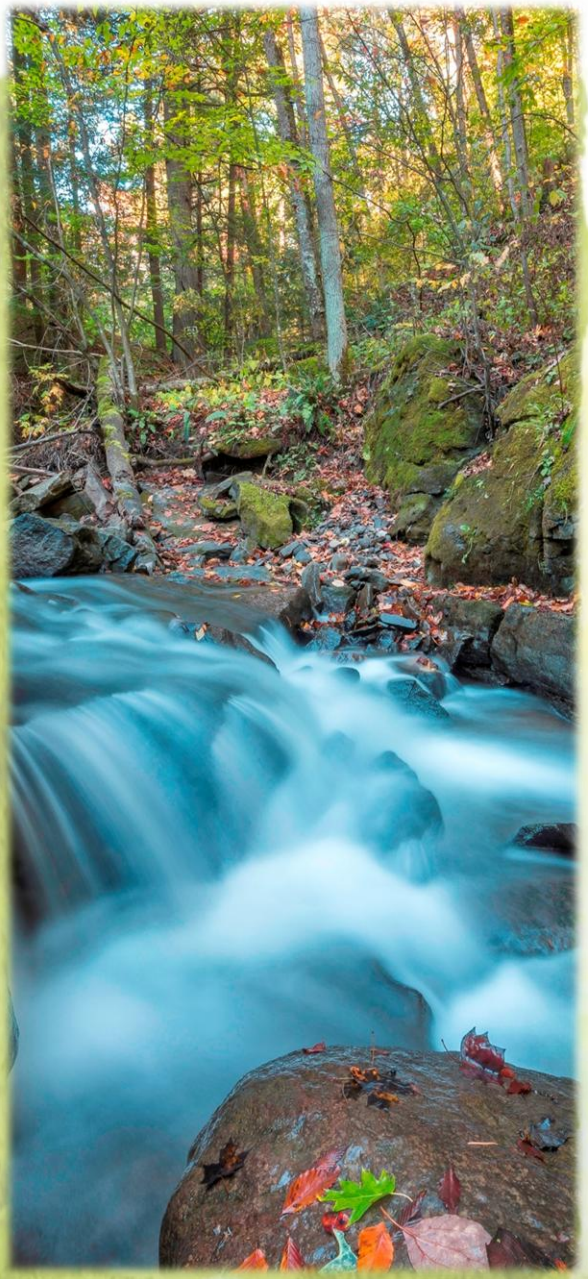
Naturally Niagara

Newsletter of the Niagara Chapter, Trout Unlimited Canada

Chair's Message



Walk the headwaters of Twelve Mile Creek this spring, like we do, and you'll see the excessive water flows that are destroying Niagara's most significant watershed and aquatic habitat.

Changes in the climate mean changing weather patterns bringing more rain to Niagara in the spring and drier and hotter summers. Through deforestation and urbanization, there's no place for that water to go but downstream. We've replaced porous soils of former headwater or upland forests with concrete, asphalt, and shingles.

Twelve Mile Creek runs like chocolate milk after most storms these days. It has lost its balance. Too much water is flowing too quickly in the stream channel eroding the stream bed and banks. This is not good for anything that lives in the creek or for landowners who live near it.

We must get back to the principles of Watershed Based Planning and away from not taking into account the cumulative effects of planning decisions, the ecology of the watershed and the accelerating effects of Climate Change.

And while the restoration work we are doing helps mitigate damage, we must also look upstream to the source of the water. We must initiate policies now that will hopefully protect the Twelve Mile Watershed.

As a Chapter fully engaged with the Twelve Mile Creek watershed we have the science and the advantage of a Brook Trout's-eye view of the habitat. We are paying for years of poor watershed management. Now with our changing climate we have little choice but to act with urgency to save this wonderful resource.

Changes at NPCA

Following the well-publicized upheavals at the NPCA, a new interim CAO has been appointed by the new Board, and a new Restoration Division has been formed… all good news for us and other conservation organizations in the Region. Dennis and Brian met with the new CAO, Gayle Wood, and were very encouraged by her enthusiasm for our work and willingness to provide the support of the NPCA to improve Twelve Mile Creek.

HEALTHY TWELVE MILE CREEK

Time for action to bring Twelve Mile Creek back into balance! *Healthy Twelve Mile Creek* project is one answer.

Healthy Twelve Mile Creek

The launch of our Healthy Twelve Mile Creek project is set for May 4 of Lookout Golf Club in Fonthill. This initiative, funded by a SEED Grant from the Trillium Foundation, will identify three landowners along the Twelve who will become demonstration cases for how we can interact with private landowners to improve the health of the stream. At the same time, we will be engaging all landowners (who control 80% of the stream bank) to work with us in making improvements. If the program is successful, we will qualify for a Trillium GROW Grant that will expand the project to a much larger cohort of Twelve Mile Creek property owners.

Megan Lalli has been hired to manage the project, and under her direction, the launch event will feature remarks by Sam Oosterhoff, MPP for Niagara West, and Diana Huson, the Regional Councilor for Pelham, among others. A presentation by the Trillium Foundation will officially launch the program.

College Student Projects

The Ecosystem Restoration students from Niagara College have once again provided us with valuable insights into the headwaters, this time in the Lathrop Property in Fonthill. This tract, owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), has two ponds (ancient quarries) that the NCC would like to decommission. The students provided two alternatives for this project, and the NCC is moving ahead with removal of an old railway berm that will de-water the ponds and create valuable wetland in the upper reaches of the Twelve.

Our two GIS student teams, meanwhile, are providing detailed map surveys of the Lathrop Property, and a comparison survey to show the changes to the stream's course from year to year in the Short Hills. Both teams are using the latest drone imagery, along with 3D mapping. Their work will be completed in June.

Outreach: Town of Pelham

Following a meeting with Mayor Marvin Junkin, we made a presentation to the full Council on March 18, suggesting a partnership that would include changes in the way the Town Public Works and Planning Departments interact with Twelve Mile Creek. (See Chair's message, above.) We also suggested the health of the Creek should be included in the Town's Strategic Plan. The presentation was well received and referred to staff for follow-up.

Our concern for the Twelve caught the attention of media representatives at the meeting and resulted in front page coverage in the *St. Catharines Standard* and *Niagara This Week*, as well as an interview with Brian Green on *The Matt Hayes Show* on CKTB.

Outreach: St. John's

The Niagara Chapter was well represented at the annual NPCA's St. John's Pond Opening Day event. Demonstrations of fly tying and fly casting drew in the participants to hear our conservation and "catch and release" message. The NPCA is continuing its investigation regarding stocking with Brook Trout (complicated by the necessity to remove all the bass from the pond and collect eggs native to the watershed) and have promised to move to artificial lures only, and eventually, catch and release.

The Opening Day event was also a chance to show off our new display tent, sponsored by Enbridge.

Outreach: Flies and Flights

On April 28th the fly-tying members of our Chapter held the first "Flies and Flights" event at Kame and Kettle Beer Works in Fonthill. The idea was to bring out people interested in the art of fly tying, and the art of craft brewing for an afternoon of sampling the two. Organized by Jeremy Garrett, the afternoon provided an opportunity to introduce a new audience to our conservation activities and win new friends for our Chapter… and provided a social afternoon for members.

Upcoming Events

May 6: Introduction to Fly Fishing for Chippewa Scouts. **May 13** followup session on Fly Tying. **May 25** practice fishing at Doug's pond.

Please hold the date for this year's Healing Waters Program in collaboration with Soldier On. The Niagara Chapter of TUC will once again be welcoming injured Canadian Forces soldiers to Niagara for a three day intro to fly fishing. Please hold the dates of Oct. 1,2,3 and let us know if you are interested in being part of this important event.

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Newsletter Editor: Brian Green
Contributions to future newsletters are welcome.
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Niagara Chapter, Trout Unlimited Canada

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