



# Cross Currents

August 2009

## Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Scientific evidence has proven that angler's equipment, particularly felt soles, is responsible for moving some AIS species such as whirling disease spores, Didymo, and New Zealand mud snails.



Alaska took a major step this year toward preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. In response to a proposal by Juneau Trout Unlimited Chapter Member, Mark Vinsel, the state Board of Fisheries agreed to ban the use of felt sole waders in Southeast Alaska's freshwater streams as of January 1, 2011.

It's believed to be the first time a state regulatory body has adopted such a prohibition.

"We applaud both Mark's initiative and the foresight of the Board in passing this proposal and starting Alaska on its way to protecting our fisheries statewide," said Trout Unlimited Southeast Alaska Project Director, Mark Kaelke.

Although Alaska's waters are relatively free of invasive species currently, Trout Unlimited expects that without further proactive measures and increased awareness of potential problems, it is simply a matter of time before state waterways become infected

with invasive species that have devastated fisheries elsewhere.

"Other states and countries have spent millions to fight the spread of invasive species like Whirling disease and New Zealand mudsnails and they've lost millions in revenue due to resulting declines in fish production. We have the opportunity to prevent that from happening in Alaska," Kaelke said.

In addition to recommending that anglers inspect, clean, and dry their equipment, TU has called on gear manufacturers to stop producing felt-soled waders by 2011. Several manufacturers, including Simms, Patagonia and L.L.Bean have already debuted new wading boot technologies that are more resistant to invasive species. Of 220 respondents to a poll on the TU blog (<http://troutunlimitedblog.com/>) those willing to make the switch to alternatives to felt soles outnumbered felt-only by a 3:1 margin.

## August Meeting

Tuesday, August 4, 7:00 p.m. we will be back to our usual location at D Rowe's. Curt Morgret will entertain us by playing his guitar, singing, dancing and performing magic tricks including, but not limited to pulling a 32" brown trout out of the pocket of his shorts. Be sure to come see Curt. The August 4<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held 7 pm at D Rowe's, located off Forum, just north of the intersection with Nifong.

## [Good News for Madison Fly Fishers: Rainbow Trout Populations Continue to Rebound](#)

by Tom Chandler on July 21, 2009 The Trout Underground Fly Fishing Blog

The news from the Madison River is all good these days – the rainbow trout population is rebounding, though the biologist who used to be in charge of whirling disease in Montana isn't really sure why.

(As an added journalistic bonus, he retired last year and now raises dachshunds). From the [Associated Press](#):

In the 1990s, whirling disease slashed the rainbow trout population by 90 percent compared to levels measured in the 1960s and '70s.

Now, after a succession of rebound years, rainbows under 10 inches have "pretty well recovered to pre-whirling levels" and the population of those larger is about 60 percent of what it was before the disease, said Dick Vincent, whirling-disease coordinator for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks until his retirement last winter.

Vincent has now embarked on a new career as a breeder of dachshunds, but the agency says Vincent remains the authority on whirling disease in Montana.

Rainbows in the blue-ribbon Madison River, where guides this summer charge about \$425 per boat for a day of fishing, have developed considerable resistance to the disease, a parasitic condition often characterized by a tail-chasing whirl. How that resistance came about is unknown, Vincent said.

Later in the report, Vincent wonders if whirling-resistant trout genes didn't find their way into the Madison's population via reservoir trout:

Vincent said he suspects, but cannot prove, that whirling-disease resistance in Madison River fish is tied to disease-resistant trout that were in southwestern Montana's Willow Creek Reservoir, somehow ended up in the Madison years ago and shared favorable genes with fish there.

Dave Kumlien of the Bozeman-based Whirling Disease Foundation, part of the conservation group Trout Unlimited, said developments on the Madison are encouraging but "we're not entirely sure the population is recovered. The infection level in the river is still quite high."

However it's happening, it's good news for anglers – and a sign that whirling disease may eventually not the pack the punch it has the past.

## **50 Years of Conservation Success**

2009 marks the 50th anniversary of TU's founding on the banks of the Au Sable River near Grayling, Michigan. The 16 fishermen who gathered at the home of George Griffith were united by their love of trout fishing, and by their growing discontent with the state's practice of

stocking its waters with "cookie cutter trout"—catchable-sized hatchery fish. Convinced that Michigan's trout streams could turn out a far superior fish if left to their own devices, the anglers formed a new organization: Trout, Unlimited (the comma was dropped a few years later) dedicated to ensuring that wild and native trout populations were allowed to thrive, as nature intended.

From the beginning, TU was guided by the principle that if we "take care of the fish, then the fishing will take care of itself." And that principle was grounded in science. "One of our most important objectives is to develop programs and recommendations based on the very best information and thinking available," said TU's first president, Dr. Casey E. Westell Jr. "In all matters of trout management, we want to know that we are substantially correct, both morally and biologically."

In 1962-63, TU prepared its first policy statement on wild trout, and persuaded the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to curtail "put-and-take" trout stocking and start managing for wild trout and healthy habitat. On the heels of that success, anglers quickly founded TU chapters in Illinois, Wisconsin, New York, and Pennsylvania.

From its hundreds of local stream restoration projects, to helping lead the way to remove the Edwards Dam on the Kennebec River in Maine, to compelling Congress to strengthen the Clean Water Act, TU has a strong 50 year track record of conservation achievements. Perhaps TU's greatest strength is that it works at multiple levels of society and government to achieve its mission. From the landowner on the stream bank, to the state fisheries agency, to the Halls of Congress, TU is working to achieve its vision.

