

## Down on the farm, things are looking up for Spring Creek's wild trout

by Arthur Kempf, Spring Creek Chapter TU



The crew constructing a mudsill on Spring Creek

pecial catch-and-release regulations for most of the stream's length provide fishermen with year-round fishing opportunities. That's the good news and, as Spring Creek Chapter TU Habitat Committee Chairman Joe Boston says, "It's a marvel that in this urban setting, with everything that's happened to Spring Creek, it continues to be such an incredible trout stream."

This article outlines the work that is being done by the Spring Creek Chapter in partnership with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Clearwater Conservancy, the Centre County Conservation District and other conservation groups and citizens, to protect and improve the quality of Spring Creek and its watershed.

Most anglers agree that Centre County's Spring Creek is one of the best trout fisheries in Pennsylvania, and its reputation goes well beyond the borders of the Keystone State. This limestone gem boasts high densities of wild brown trout and miles of easy public access. Spe-

Rapid urban growth in the State College area has resulted in increased stormwater runoff and riparian zone losses. These ultimately impact the stream by increasing stream-bank erosion, siltation and thermal loading. Siltation is especially damaging, as it affects every part of the food chain, as well as spawning habitat.

Riparian habitat enhancements and construction of instream fish habitat improvement structures that serve the dual purposes of improving habitat and reducing bank erosion are a key focus of our TU work. Habitat improvement, combined with riparian protection and enhancement, will benefit the entire community. Trout fisherman can hopefully look forward to a bright future for Spring Creek's trout fishery.



Above, a 100-foot mudsill enhances habitat and helps stabilize the stream bank. Above right, spectators during the Sheep Farm Project.

The Spring Creek Chapter was awarded a three-year, \$179,200 grant from the Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation and Natural Re-

sources Community Conservation Partnership Program, to build six instream and riparian habitat enhancement projects in the Spring Creek watershed from 2007 to 2010.

Matching funds have been secured from National TU Embrace-A-Stream grants, Spring Creek Chapter pledges, Centre County Conservation District grant funds, and Clearwater Conservancy grant monies focused on riparian improvements (continued on page 7)

### IN THIS ISSUE

**What Resource First Really Means ... 2**

**Spring ExCom Reports ... 4**

**2008 PATU Awards -- Time to Nominate a Winner ... 5**

**New PATU policies: Channelization; Hazardous Waste; Acid & Mercury Deposition ... 8**

**A TU Chapter's Stream-work Secret ... 10**

**PFBC Recommits to "Resource First" ... 11**

**Reports From the Chapters ... 12**

emphasis on the fostering and restoration of wild trout populations wherever feasible.

### Spring Creek Sheep Farm Project, continued

for Spring Creek. In-kind services provided by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Spring Creek Chapter, and other volunteers, as well as donations of materials and equipment, also "count" toward matching grant funds. The Spring Creek Chapter has been fortunate to have generous local business donors who have supplied logs, stone and other materials and equipment for the projects.

The first instream habitat enhancement project was completed during August 2007. Volunteers from the Spring Creek Chapter, the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission, Clearwater Conservancy and local citizens waded into Spring Creek at the Penn State University Sheep Farm, off Puddintown Road. After four days of work (total of 71 man-days), the team completed construction of a 100-foot-long mudsill and nine multi-log vane deflectors, along approximately 1,200-feet of stream. Clusters of large boulders were also strategically placed in the stream for habitat improvement.



**At the Sheep Farm Project, multi-log vane deflectors and instream habitat boulders.**

Design and placement of the habitat improvement structures, heavy equipment and operators, and project supervision were provided by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Jason Detar (Fisheries Biologist) and Dave Keller (Habitat Manager) assisted with all phases of the project. The Division of Habitat Management, including Dave and Jason, are available to provide assistance to groups interested in habitat enhancement work and can be contacted for further information.

Riparian buffer enhancement was also a significant part of the Penn State Sheep Farm project. This included removal and relocation of approximately 2,700 feet of livestock fencing, to provide a larger riparian buffer (35 to 65 feet). Planting of native trees and shrubs will provide stream shading and will be managed by the Clearwater Conservancy this spring. Spring Creek

Chapter volunteers will also support this phase of the project.

What's next? Six projects have been identified for completion from 2008 to 2010. Plans for 2008 include riparian enhancements, construction of instream habitat structures and a public access area, including a canoe access ramp at the former McCoy Dam site, located between Bellefonte and Milesburg. Significant resources will be utilized to restore this 2,000-foot section of stream.

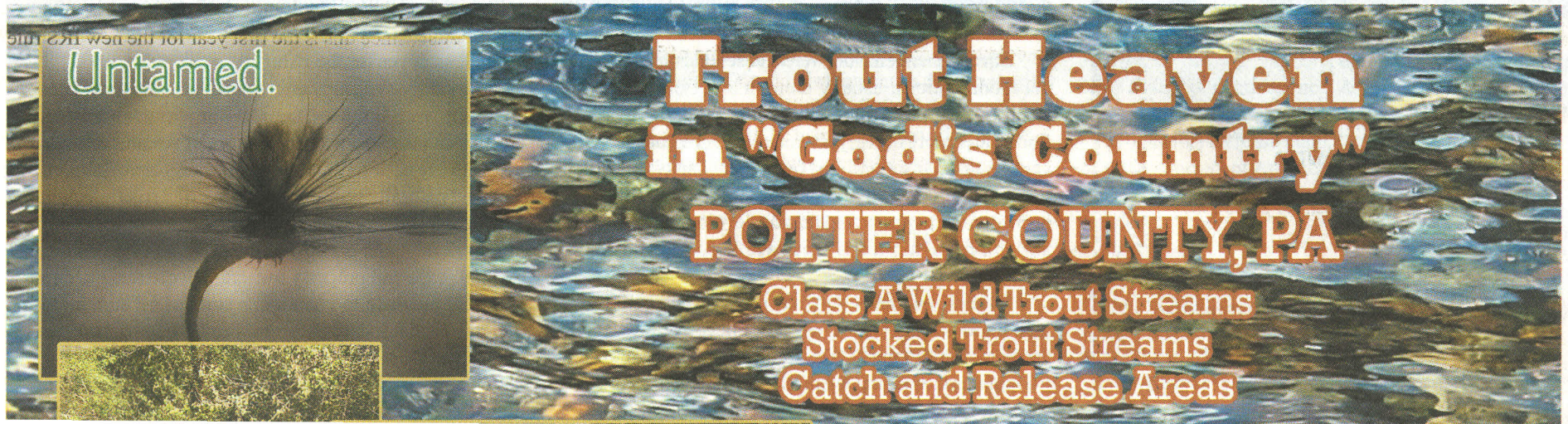
Habitat work at the former McCoy Dam site is ten-

tatively scheduled for August and September 2008. Anyone who would like to volunteer is welcome to participate and encouraged to contact Joe Boston for details, 814-861-5566. It's a great opportunity to learn and have some fun with fellow TU members. Additionally, a stream section above SR 550, located on Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, property is also scheduled for completion during late summer 2008.

Stream enhancement sites identified for 2009 and 2010 are Spring Creek Park near Houserville; the upper stretch of the Penn State Sheep Farm; Fisherman's Paradise; and the "Rock" (pending resolution of the Rockview Correctional Facility land divestment).

No doubt it's an ambitious program, but partnering with other organizations that bring both expertise and resources is essential. The benefits of the Penn State Sheep Farm project are already evident in improved stream flow pattern and reduced bank erosion. Stream surveys to evaluate water quality, physical habitat and the wild brown trout population will be conducted to evaluate the project improvements.

We're excited about the future of the wild brown trout population inhabiting Spring Creek, but the benefits go well beyond that of trout numbers. Education of youth and the general public about the serious environmental challenges that lie ahead is an equally important message and certainly worthy of our commitment.



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