

Minutes of the Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited Meeting, Feb 22, 2021

Present via Zoom: Jim Wilson, Bill Pierce, Eric Tichay, Tom Benzing, Deidra Stultz, Seth Coffman, Jeff Yates, Urbie Nash, Jeff Deering, Richard Foust, Amy Orr, Scott Allen.

1. Minutes of the last meeting were accepted into the record.
2. It was determined that we held a quorum of chapters represented, so elections were held. Doug Jessie was elected to Secretary and Jim Wilson was elected to Vice Chair. We still need to fill the Chair position. Josh Hart resigned from the chair position just prior to this meeting. Also, Bob Burnley resigned from the Executive Committee (Advocacy). Bill Pierce will follow up with Jason McGarvey to see if he will fill the Advocacy role.
3. A brief discussion on the status of the stalled Mountain Valley Pipeline was had. It was determined that we need more facts and better reporting on the subject. Doug volunteered to do more research and report back.
4. Jim Wilson, our Climate Change Coordinator, gave us some updates. We need to encourage climate change discussions and information sharing at the chapter level. Specifically in meetings, newsletters, etc. Should be a regular point of emphasis. Encourage folks to read Chase Whiting's recent blog post. <https://www.tu.org/blog/action-on-climate-change-moving-ahead-in-washington/> Also, encourage support of HR 763 Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act. Members are encouraged to provide stories how climate change has affected them, their streams and their fishing. There is national TU Climate Change working group that meets monthly via Zoom if people are interested in joining.
5. The VCTU events calendar for 2021 is set. Thanks, Eric.
6. VTSSS testing was postponed in 2020. It is now set to occur on 4/24, with any addition sampling, delivery of samples and follow up by 4/30. Training by multiple Zoom sessions will start in March. Details will be announced. Over 400 samples will be collected and analyzed. The following are monitored: calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, pH, sulfate, nitrate and chloride. Microplastic content will be monitored for the first time, also.
7. Bylaw reviews are currently ongoing. They were last amended in 2013. Eric, Tom and Bill are leading that effort. Give them any feedback, please. Jeff Yates pointed out that National bylaws are also being revised, so he recommended not revising council bylaws until the national effort is complete.
8. Chapter reports were received from those present. Massanutten reports no face-to-face meetings. Reported on restoration and new message board on Beaver Creek. They are ready for sampling. Northern Virginia has upcoming elections and a 2-fly event this Spring on private water. Rapidan's Kids Fishing Classes are on for Fauquier Park. South River is entering into a study with the VA Museum of Natural History to discover the source of juvenile Rainbows in the South River. Smith River had its first of 4 scheduled clean ups the previous Sat. They only have to fill a few sampling sites before March 24. March meeting will be virtual. Winchester reported they have had virtual meeting and a full newsletter.
9. The Treasurer reported a balance of \$68,969.04 which was unchanged from our last meeting. We will have to disperse funds pledged to restoration work on North River that has been completed. Bill will get with Seth on that.

10. We discussed Conservation Bills that will be voted on later in the week in the General Assembly. Pipeline accountability, Styrofoam regulation, wildlife corridors, how conservation easements are interpreted and ensuring integrity. Discussion was had about combining aquatic bridges/culverts with terrestrial crossings. The Council needs to get involved with state agencies that will be developing action plans after the bills pass.
11. We received a large tackle donation from the widow of a deceased member. Tom relayed the story of receiving and cataloging the many rods, reels, fly tying equipment and supplies. Some material may be sold or raffled, but most will go towards trout camp or other youth events. Get with Tom if you have ideas/requests.
12. Seth reported on the North River restoration project and the addition of a new team member he is training that help him expand his restoration efforts. Jeff Yates brought us up to speed on the new TU website and how to access and navigate the Leader Tools. The meeting was then adjourned.
13. The next Council meeting is an Executive Committee call on March 22nd at 8pm.