

Little Elkhart Chapter of Trout Unlimited Update

Mike Beachy president of the Little Elkhart Chapter presented an update of the chapters activities. The T.U. chapter is starting its third year.

Catch and Release fishing on the Little Elkhart River has met with great success. Mike expressed that the protected water has greatly expanded the fishing season from one of several weeks to one of several months. The state-stocked rainbows are lasting until the summer water temperatures cause them to leave the area in search for cooler habitat near the end of July. Until that time statistics show a catch rate averaging at 2 trout per angler hour. Property owners are appreciative of a "better" class of fishermen. Complaints of trash, illegal camping and over crowding where non-existent.

The Little Elkhart Chapter has many new projects in the works. They have a newsletter that goes out 4 to 5 times yearly and soon will have a web site. The Chapter has reincarnated the old NEITA fence stile crossing project and is offering land owners fence crossing stiles along the river for better fishermen access and property owner relations. They have produced a "Fishing Guide to the Little Elkhart River" that outlines general information and access sites for out of town trout fishermen wishing to try trout fishing the Little Elkhart. This spring they will be undertaking a river clean up project on Rowe Eden Ditch to remove debris that restricts water flow.

The Little Elkhart Chapter is attempting to establish a year round trout fishery on the Little Elkhart River. The first step in this process was to establish a section of catch and release protected water. Mike thanked NEITA for all the support in its effort to establish catch and release. The second effort is to stock the river with brown trout that have the ability to withstand the summer water temperatures. The Chapter is planning on planting 500, eight to ten inch brown trout each year for the next three years in an effort to establish this year round trout fishery.

Mike invited the NEITA membership to the Chapters Spring Outing on May 10th at Riverbend Park in Middlebury. At 9:00 the chapter will be giving guided tours of the access sites and what type of water to expect at each site. They will also be giving demonstrations on techniques they use to take trout on the Little Elkhart River utilizing fly equipment. Participants are encouraged to bring their own fishing gear so they can try out the information they picked up from the coaches. From 11:00 to 2:00 lunch will be served and a Federation of Fly Fishers casting instructor will be giving a casting demonstration and instruction followed by a fly casting contest. The Outing will end with the drawing of the raffle "Adopt-A-Trout" fundraiser they are doing to finance the brown trout stocking project.