



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
AWARDS**

2018





THANK YOU FOR BEING A VOLUNTEER!



Trout Unlimited's 4,000+ passionate and dedicated volunteer leaders who drive our more than 420 chapters and councils are the heart of our organization's strength and the major drivers of the impact we make together improving our rivers and watersheds.

Thanks to all of you, and the local level work that each of you do every day, TU is one of the most effective coldwater conservation organizations across the country and a model of how effective, local grassroots action and advocacy can change the world.

Last year, our chapters and councils recorded an astounding 735,000 hours of volunteer service!

Together, you planted a better future and restored rivers with over 1,013 conservation projects, ignited a spark in the next generation with more than 1,682 youth education programs and raised more than \$10 million for your local programs and services!

Thank you for making TU the powerful, grassroots organization that it is! We would not be able to accomplish all that we do without you.

Please consider nominating someone in your chapter or council, or a community or agency partner for a TU award in the future.

To make a nomination for 2019, please visit www.tu.org/awards.



Since the early 1960s, Trout Unlimited (TU) has bestowed awards to publicly recognize the outstanding achievements of its members, chapters and councils that have embodied the values of TU and fulfilled its mission to conserve, protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. TU also recognizes the contributions and accomplishments of individuals and groups outside the organization that have demonstrated significant leadership and success in the world of coldwater conservation.

Today, TU is proud to showcase an exceptional group of achievements by these award winners who represent grassroots conservation successes, professional commitment to conservation excellence and organizational strength within our chapters and councils.

Congratulations 2018 TU National Conservation Award recipients!

Chapter / Council Awards

Gold Trout Award: 349 - Deerfield River Watershed (MA)

Silver Trout Award: 726 - Pemigewasset (NH)

Volunteer Awards

Distinguished Service Leadership: Terry Turner (OR)

Distinguished Service Conservation: Gary Barrigar (TN)

Distinguished Service Youth Education: Zoe Mihalas (NC)

Distinguished Service Veteran Services: Jim & Jo Borowski (MT)

Distinguished Service Communications: Michigan Council (MI)

Partner Awards

Jack Williams Award for Applied Conservation Science:

Leslie Weldon, U.S. Forest Service

Corporate Conservation Partner:

Mendocino Redwood & Humboldt Redwood Companies

Conservation Professional: Tom Koerner, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Communications Professional: Rocky Barker—Idaho Statesman



GOLD TROUT AWARD



349—DEERFIELD RIVER WATERSHED CHAPTER (MA)



Volunteers with the 349 Deerfield River Watershed Chapter sample trout redds in the chapter's namesake river to establish evidence of spawning success and improve stream protections.

In August 2011, when Hurricane Irene dumped more than 12 inches of rain on Western Massachusetts, the flood and mismanaged post-flood construction efforts decimated many area streams.

Out of that disaster, the 349 Deerfield River Watershed Chapter was born to protect and restore the tailwater fishery and tributaries to that system.

From the outset, the chapter embraced the model of doing more together and being a good partner to leverage the strengths and skills of all involved. Early examples included helping the MA/RI Council raise over \$45,000 in just a few short weeks to help a land trust purchase 100 acres to protect prime brook trout habitat, as well as arrange for a boat donation to the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife to aid in their electro-fishing sampling efforts.

But it is through “angler science” efforts that the chapter has truly made a mark, tackling the threat of a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing process to conduct studies in the Deerfield, prove spawning was taking place, and demand that state and federal agencies require more stringent flow protections in the river from the hydro-electric dam facilities.

With only 100 members, this small, rural chapter is making big waves!



SILVER TROUT AWARD



726—PEMIGEWASSET CHAPTER (NH)



An army of volunteers from the 726—Pemigewasset Chapter, partners at NH Fish & Game, and professors and students from Plymouth State University sample brook trout in the Beebe River.

Nestled in 6,000 acres in the Pemigewasset and Merrimack river watersheds, the Beebe River is a native brook trout stronghold in New Hampshire.

When The Conservation Fund purchased this tract in 2014, it was a crucial connective piece in a tapestry of protected state and federal forest and park lands and presented the 726 Pemigewasset Chapter with a unique opportunity. While the stream habitat in this parcel was in good condition, there were five culverts posing barriers to fish passage and cutting trout off from critical spawning and rearing habitat on cold, clear tributary streams.

To tackle the challenge, the chapter helped build a powerful partnership with TU staff and more than a dozen other federal, state, municipal and private agencies and landowners to raise the funds, manage the effort and—over the course of three years—reconnect more than 6 miles of river.

Making the effort even more impactful, the chapter fully engaged and relied upon students and professors at Plymouth State University, developing the project, and the stream, as a resource which will educate and inspire future generations of budding scientists, biologists and ecologists.



MENDOCINO & HUMBOLDT REDWOOD COMPANIES



Thirty years ago, the Mendocino Redwood Company opened its lands to Trout Unlimited in an unlikely partnership which has made a monumental difference for coho and steelhead in California.

Large timber companies and TU may not seem like natural partners in the fight to save California's endangered coho salmon and coastal steelhead, but without such an effort, there might not be a future for these streams.

The unique regional initiative, known as the North Coast Coho Project, began in 1998 when the Mendocino Redwood Company (which later added the Humboldt Redwood Company) acquired hundreds of thousands of acres of lands in the headwaters of critical spawning streams spanning three counties in Northern California.

Working in partnership, this company and TU staff have focused on removing or improving the network of mostly unpaved logging roads that choke streams with sediment, opening access to more than 57 miles of habitat by removing culverts and other barriers to fish passage and adding hundreds of trees to streams to create diverse habitat needed by salmon and steelhead.

All told, the companies have invested \$3.4 million in and with TU and inspired dozens of other timber interests to also be similarly good stewards of their lands and the important waters flowing through them.



ZOE MIHALAS (NC)



Zoe Mihalas has an infectious laugh and an inspiring passion for ensuring that her generation will carry on the fight to protect trout and salmon in the years and decades to come.

Though she's not yet in college herself, Zoe Mihalas has likely helped shape and direct the future career paths of many young conservationists by sharing her own passion and dedication with them.

From a TU family, with a father who has held nearly every volunteer role possible, Zoe is a powerful voice for conservation in her own right as a board member of her local 034—Pisgah Chapter in North Carolina.

Where Zoe is truly at her best is in the way she inspires fellow youth around the country as a leader within TU's Youth Leadership Council. Harnessing the skills of her generation, Zoe helps coordinate social media projects and contests, all meant to bring new teens into TU and get them to participate in events like camps and the TU Teen Summit. She helped run a "Keep 'em Wet" Instagram contest to educate teen anglers on catch and release, helped plan and carry out TU Teen Leadership Summits in Montana, Michigan, and Virginia, and has served on YLC strategic planning and outreach projects.

Zoe continues to build the momentum of youth engagement in TU and to set an example for us all to educate, empower and elect youth in our leadership!



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE: COMMUNICATIONS

In memory of Jean Bollinger



MICHIGAN COUNCIL



Each issue of Michigan Trout magazine connects thousands of members and supporters to the incredible work taking place in the state where TU was founded.

Four times a year, the 6,000 TU members in Michigan are treated to stories of conservation success, entertained by fishing tales and tips, educated about important issues facing fisheries in the state and encouraged to get active and get involved.

Michigan Trout, the quarterly magazine of the Michigan Council of TU, is a polished, professional and comprehensive communications piece that is firing on all cylinders and helping the council keep its members connected to the great work done in their name and on their behalf across the state—and beyond.

The articles—an equal mix of celebrations of chapter and council wins and cautionary tales of threats on the horizon—inspire members to learn more, get active, lend their voice to an advocacy effort, support the work financially, and offer their time and talent to the mission of TU in their home state.

Attractive in design to catch the eye, easy to read, and offering a diversity of topics and voices, *Michigan Trout*, does a great job of making all members feel part of something bigger than themselves and excited to be involved with an organization accomplishing so much to protect, reconnect and restore the state's rivers and streams.



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE: LEADERSHIP

In memory of Stan Griffith



TERRY TURNER (OR)



Whether piloting his family through the bay, or shepherding the Oregon Council through advocacy efforts to protect salmon, Terry's steady hand and demeanor match his focus and determination.

For more than two decades, Terry Turner has served in nearly every leadership role in TU — volunteering countless hours and driving hands-on conservation projects, powerful youth engagement events, high level partnerships, and important strategy and leadership development efforts.

From his early days as a leader with the 677—Clackamas River Chapter to the past four years as the Oregon Council Chair, Terry recognizes that to drive growth, change and impact he has to focus on communications, mentorship, and partnership. In all of these areas, he truly leads by example.

Terry's passion comes especially from his desire to mentor young angler-conservationists. Through his personal efforts and support of an ever-growing number of youth events and camps, Terry is ensuring there are future leaders and stewards stepping up behind him to carry on the mission.

Of particular note has been Terry's guidance of the Salmon Super Highway Partnership, where he has facilitated the integration of the many partners, including county, state, federal, agriculture, and watershed groups to strategically address fish passage on coastal rivers in Oregon.



JACK WILLIAMS AWARD FOR APPLIED CONSERVATION SCIENCE



LESLIE WELDON — U.S. FOREST SERVICE



For more than three decades, Leslie Weldon has been an integral part of the U.S. Forest Service's programs to improve and protect ecosystems and water quality across the country.

There are more than 193 million acres of National Forests and Grasslands that Leslie Weldon, Deputy Chief for the National Forest System with the U.S. Forest Service, is responsible for managing and stewarding on behalf of us all.

The scale of that task alone is monumental, but when you couple it with the fact that these lands must be managed to provide outdoor recreation, protect watershed and forest health, prepare for important fire management, account for the economics of forest products, livestock grazing, energy and mineral development, and create and maintain forest roads and facilities, you begin to understand how vital it is to apply the best possible science to all decisions.

In her 36-year career with the Forest Service, beginning in 1981 as a summer hire monitoring seedlings, fighting forest fires, and surveying spotted owls in Washington state, Leslie has always ensured the plans and decisions made about our nation's most important and ecologically diverse landscapes are rooted in the best data, have the best collaborators and partners at the table, and are made with the longest possible timeline as an outcome.

She is a conservation scientist in every sense of the term.



JIM & JO BOROWSKI (MT)



Jim and Jo Borowski are a true team in every sense of the word and together have made a meaningful impact in the lives of so many of our nation's veterans.

For Jim and Jo Borowski of the 085—Flathead Valley Chapter in Montana, honoring the service of our nation's veterans and helping them and their families—recover from the physical and emotional wounds of war is a passion that has become a calling.

Through their own chapter's Veterans Service Partnership—which supports Warriors and Quiet Waters, to their dedication to national veterans programs and events, Jim and Jo have given so much time and care to the effort, and inspired many more to do so as well.

The chapter's Veterans Fly-A-Thon Challenge is a powerful example of creating a community around our veterans. The couple and their chapter asked for help and were blown away when hundreds of people tied or donated a total of 6,817 flies to give to Warriors & Quiet Waters for their veterans outings.

On the TU annual veteran couples outing to Silvertip Ranch on Slough Creek, Jim and Jo serve as guides and companions for the week, building personal relationships and helping spouses come together to heal through fly fishing.

Jim and Jo embody the spirit and passion of the Veterans Service Partnership.



GARY BARRIGAR (TN)



Gary Barrigar's commitment to conservation and engaging an entire community in river stewardship is evident in the countless hours he invests in building the 494—Overmountain Chapter's programs.

The legacy of brook trout conservation in northeast Tennessee cannot be told without the name Gary Barrigar. A board member and Conservation Chair of the 492—Overmountain Chapter for more than 20 years, Gary has organized and participated in over 50 river cleanups and engaged youth through fishing camps, his own high school science classroom and by bringing Trout in the Classroom to Tennessee.

Gary builds connections and relationships throughout the community, ties which lead to natural collaborations making possible projects like riparian restoration on Buffalo Creek, water quality and benthic community assessments in Dick Creek, and creation of the Watauga River Bluffs State Natural Area.

Spreading the mission beyond just TU, Gary was integral in founding two other conservation groups, Friends of Roan Mountain and the Boone Watershed Alliance to recruit and attract even more people to support clean water.

For the members in his chapter, the volunteers in his community and the partners in the many agencies and organizations he works with, Gary is a force for good and a shining example of what it means to be a TU volunteer.



CONSERVATION PROFESSIONAL



TOM KOERNER — U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE



Tom Koerner fell in love with the Seedskafee National Wildlife Refuge and his passion for the place is evident in the care and focus he brings to preserving and restoring its resources.

It takes special people to live on the wind-swept, sage brush benches of the Seedskafee National Wildlife Refuge in Wyoming. Tom Koerner not only loves the rugged landscape, he invests all of himself in managing the refuge as the project lead for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

While working with partners is part of the job, Tom is incredibly focused on ensuring that all of his work not only does what is best for the refuge, but also helps his colleagues and collaborators achieve their goals as well.

Whether working with TU staff and volunteers to build habitat structures and hatching boxes on the Big Sandy River, fencing off the riparian area around Red Creek, or conducting irrigation ditch electroshocking surveys to see how many fish were being lost from the Green River—and then finding the funds to fix the problem—Tom's stick-to-it-ness and ability to work through issues make every project a success.

Importantly, as an excellent wildlife photographer, Tom's work is frequently shared by federal agencies online and in social media, helping ensure all U.S. residents come to appreciate and love the public lands he manages.



ROCKY BARKER — IDAHO STATESMAN



For more than three decades, Rocky Barker's research, reporting and writing on rivers, ecosystems, dam removals and more have influenced citizens, votes and legislation for the better.

Rocky Barker, an author, writer and producer, has lent his powerful voice to the issues of river conservation for more than three decades.

His research for a series of editorials in the Idaho Statesman in 1997 calling for the breaching of four Snake River dams to save salmon has been heralded by many as the beginning of a river restoration movement and a tectonic shift from a national attitude that all dams are good and necessary.

Last year, his powerful reexamination of the issue of salmon, hatcheries and dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers and throughout the Pacific provided an influx of energy and focus that is helping drive the dam removal effort.

He co-authored the [Flyfisher's Guide to Idaho](#), and is the author of [Scorched Earth: How the Fires of Yellowstone Changed America](#) and [Saving All the Parts: Reconciling Economics and the Endangered Species Act](#).

Above all else, Rocky is a lover of rivers and wild places and a true friend to TU and our mission—while he retired this year from the newspaper, he remains an active writer and supporter with his columns for the High Country News.



**IF YOU TAKE CARE OF THE FISH,
THE FISHING TAKES CARE OF ITSELF**

NOMINATE YOUR LOCAL VOLUNTEERS

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