

September 23, 2010

To: Fellow TU Chapters and Members of Trout Unlimited

From: Copper Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited (CCCTU)

It has come to our attention that your chapter may have been contacted recently by John Griffith of the North Woods Conservancy (NWC). He is requesting monetary donations for the purchase a 40-acre tract of land encompassing Conglomerate Falls on the Gratiot River in Keweenaw County, Michigan. As this property is within our chapter's service area, we are obliged to explain our position on the issue.

It must be understood that we, as an organization and as individuals, do not oppose the purchase and conservation of this property in any manner. We encourage the efforts in this area where many of our members have fished and hunted for decades. CCCTU has a long history with this stretch of the Gratiot River, having helped to establish the Gratiot River Park where the river empties into Lake Superior and having collaborated with the Michigan DNRE to re-establish coaster brook trout in this stream. Moreover, we do not have any personal issues with the Griffiths or their associates in the North Woods Conservancy. John and his wife Jane are Life Members of Trout Unlimited and are acquainted with many of our chapter members.

However, the Board of Directors of CCCTU has chosen not to support the fundraising activities of the NWC on the Conglomerate Falls project for several specific reasons:

First and foremost, the NWC has chosen to ignore our chapter's key requirement of ensuring perpetual public access to the site through a deed restriction or conservation easement held by a third party. Currently, there would be no legal recourse to prevent the sale and closure of the property at any time in the future.

Secondly, the \$30,000 fundraising goal merely covers the down payment on the purchase. Three times that amount must be raised to complete the purchase and confidence is not high that NWC will succeed in securing the necessary funds. If it does not succeed, the possibility exists that the current owner will have to sell to a developer and/or subdivide the riverfront property.

Lastly, the NWC states that the property will be open to public access "as it always has been". Yet, their own web site states that any person who rents the cabin on the property during whitetail deer bow hunting season will have exclusive rights to hunt on the 40-acre parcel. What is there to prevent them from becoming a private hunting ranch by extending "pay to play" to other seasons? Will a few hundred dollars ensure exclusive access to this stretch of river for a week of steelhead fishing in the spring? Will a hunting club buy up the time slots in September and October for grouse hunting?

These are just three of several questions and concerns raised by CCCTU that have not been met with a satisfactory response from NWC. Since they were unable to alleviate our concerns, we had no choice but to turn down their request for money.

To make a donation at this point would take a tremendous leap of faith that the project will succeed – something we might do on an individual basis, but cannot do as a TU Chapter. It would be fiscally irresponsible to be that casual with the chapter's money.

As many of you know, we are in the midst of a fundraising campaign for a much larger prize – nearly 1400 acres of pristine forest land in Houghton County with over two miles of the Pilgrim River winding its way through the heart of the property. Less than five miles from the City of Houghton, it is home to bear, wolves, deer, bobcat, grouse, eagles and other wildlife that live amongst magnificent stands of hardwood and historic white pine and northern white cedar. The Pilgrim River has year-round cold water flows supporting a self-sustaining wild brook trout population. Each spring and fall, good numbers of steelhead and salmon respectively ascend the river to spawn and it is one of the few rivers in the Great Lakes that still has a decent smelt run. CCCTU and other conservation groups are working with the property owners to secure a conservation easement on the entire tract. This is likely to be a million dollar project that will guarantee protection of a significant portion of the entire watershed through restricted development and land use. It will ensure protection of wildlife habitat, enhance non-motorized recreation through thoughtful trail design and maintenance, and secure permanent public access to some of the best brook trout fishing in the Copper Country.

It is in the best interest of individuals and TU chapters to put their dollars and other resources to work where it will have the greatest impact to conserve, protect, and restore cold-water fisheries. I hope this information will help you understand the reluctance of our chapter to support NWC's efforts without a satisfactory guarantee on their part.

Best Regards and Tight Lines,



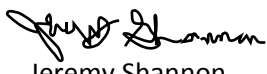
Shawn Hagan  
President, CCCTU



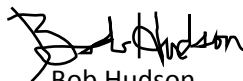
Bob Page  
Board Member



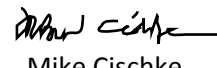
Don Kreher  
Board Member



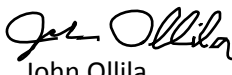
Jeremy Shannon  
Vice President



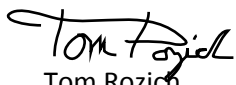
Bob Hudson  
Board Member



Mike Cischke  
Board Member



John Ollila  
Board Member



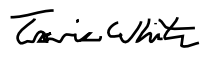
Tom Rozich  
Board Member



Jim Baker  
Board Member



Bill Leder  
Board Member



Travis White  
Board Member



Chris Ipson  
Board Member