

STEELHEAD NEWS

A Publication of the Lake Superior Steelhead Association

www.steelheaders.org

March / April 2016: Issue 389



Manfred Schillinger spey casts into the MN Brule River

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Lake Superior Steelhead Association

PO Box 16034
Duluth, MN 55816-0034

LSSA's Mission:

For these reasons and more, the Lake Superior Steelhead Association exists: to protect our rivers and fish; to help preserve Lake Superior and its bounty; to learn more about the resources we enjoy and foster discussion, research and sound fisheries management practices; to educate anglers and the public about all these things. The LSSA has taken all these tasks upon its shoulders. These issues are too important to leave to chance or the vagaries of bureaucracies and politics. Our mission is to protect and improve the cold water fishery of the Lake Superior region and to bring various groups of anglers together in an atmosphere of friendship, so they can work for their and the resources common good.

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Newsletter Editor: Scott Thorpe

*Past LSSA Presidents

News and Notes

Compiled by Scott Thorpe

Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo 2016

The Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo is right around the corner, March 18, 19 and 20. Visit their website at greatwatersflyexpo.com or find it on Facebook. The LSSA booth is looking for volunteers to help us sell memberships, merchandise and such, no experience needed. So far, we have 5 or 6 members and we need more. Let us know if you can help. There is always ample opportunity to see the rest of the Expo. Scott Thorpe 612-669-9601, email at scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com or Vic Stark 651-587-2354, email at r.victorstark@gmail.com.

2016 LSSA Youth Mentoring Underway

By the time you read this, our mentoring program will be underway. Gary Siverson reports that we have 10 youth signed up for our sessions, 4 young ladies and 6 young men. Following our two classroom sessions held at Hartley Nature Center, we will hold two field sessions at the Lester River, the Knife River or both. The Saturday morning dates for these sessions will be set when we have a better idea of the timing of the run, which depends upon the weather over the next few weeks. Typically, the dates are latter March and

early April. Mentors are needed to work with this year's class of anglers. Please contact Gary Siverson at 218-390-3916 if you can help.

MN DNR Plans Steelhead Study

Nick Peterson, Migratory Fish Specialist, MN DNR, Lake Superior Area Fisheries Office has announced that he will be conducting a study focusing on interaction between steelhead and Kamloops trout which will require the collection of scale samples for genetic analysis from anglers. The details and instructions for collecting scale samples are being finalized and more information will be announced at a presentation Nick is giving at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo on Saturday, March 19th. LSSA members will have the opportunity to be involved in this study. More information will be available on the MN DNR website and we will keep members informed via our Facebook page.

2016 Planking Party

The date of July 9th has been set for the 2016 planking party to be held at Brighton Beach in Duluth. Last year was the first time at this new location and it proved quite satisfactory. Similar view, same good food, same chance to either freeze or bask, depending upon the wind. People who are planning to attend should watch the



website at www.steelheaders.org or visit the Facebook page for updates about the event and to RSVP on the website contact page by June 30th. The event is open to all members and their guests. There is no charge, but of course donations are welcome.

Note to Membership

You are probably tired of reading this but just one more time. The annual renewal is in progress now. If you have any doubt as to renewing, please look at the mailing label on the newsletter. If it says 2016A or 2017A, you are current. If not current

please send in the annual dues ASAP.

We just received the 2016 Lake Superior Angler from the printer. The LSSA would prefer to use the bulk permit for the membership Angler mailing. It saves the club almost \$ 2 per issue in postage. If the membership comes in strong, we will have an early mailing of the magazine to everyone. So please, check your label if in doubt of renewing and if not renewed for 2016, send in the payment ASAP. Thank you.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN FISH GOES BAD...

Fishing Funny

By David Thorpe

From the Editor

This issue of the Steelhead News contains another article about swinging flies for steelhead, thanks to Rick Wiita via Paul Sandstrom. You will also see a poster in this issue for Brule Spey Day. As editor, I don't intend to steer this newsletter toward a particular technique. It's just that I am personally intrigued by spey casting and spend a lot of time learning to fish that way. If I am going to write or include something, that's likely what its going to be about. I also shore cast, dunk spawn sacks, chuck slinkies and fish nymphs below strike indicators. I am hoping some of you readers will write about those techniques and your adventures. I'd love to see an article about center pins or trolling for the summer issue. I am also so short on photos for the photo gallery that there are none included in this issue.

So, Please e-mail me with articles and photos at scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com or text at 612-669-9601.

A bit more about Brule Spey Day. Paul Sandstrom is leading the planning, I am helping. The event will be held at McNeil's, same place as last year. So far, we have a similar line-up for casting demonstrators: Bob Nasby, Dave Pinczkowski, plus we have added Andy Selvig, Brian Bergeson and there will be a few more. We are lining up product reps to bring rods/reels/lines to try and there will be some informal instruction and a chance to try this stuff out.

Upcoming Events

LSSA Youth Mentoring Field Sessions
TBD

LSSA Spring Banquet
April 16, 2016
Mr. D's, Duluth, MN

LSSA Planking Party
July 9, 2016
Brighton Beach, Duluth, MN

Brule River Spey Day
October 8, 2016
Sponsored by LSSA
McNeil's, McNeil Rd, Brule River, WI

A Fish of a Lifetime

By Rick Wiita



I woke early on this April Fools day to get to the Skagit River at a decent hour to pursue the famed wild steelhead that are making their spawning run to the far reaches of this river. On the two hour drive, I let my mind wander to past excursions chasing these illusive beauties. Some times I was successful and other times not so, but always enjoying the pursuit.

Something about this particular morning was special, but I didn't have a clue as to why that was so. During the drive I hadn't decided where I wanted to start fishing the river. The fishing reports hadn't been very good, and I had some favorite runs to pick from. April fools day came on a Wednesday this year of 2009 so it shouldn't be as crowded as it would towards the weekend. By the time I got within five miles of the river I had made up my mind where I wanted to start swinging my fly. I even knew which fly I was going to start out with.

I was pleased when I drove into the dead end road and there weren't any vehicles already parked there. I would have the run to myself this morning. I got dressed

in waders and warm clothing. It was exceptionally cold this spring and it was freezing when I walked to the run. I even had to put my gloves on before I started out. When I got to where I decided to start fishing, I tied on a sculpin pattern, an Olive Skagit Minnow designed by the PNW's famous Mike Kinney. This fly has been productive for me on several occasions, so I felt confident that if there were a fish on the take, this fly would be one to elicit a strike.

I didn't go all the way to the top of the run this morning as I usually do. But started just where the big back eddy slows and the water allows one to make a swing. I shook out some line and made a short cast, then stripped off some more and made another. By the time I got 8 strips of line out, and cast, the swing felt perfect. Just before the swing made it all the way to the dangle I felt a terrific jolt on the rod. Immediately a fish came flying out of the water. The darn thing must have come out 5 feet! It was just barely past 7:00 AM so the light conditions weren't really great and my first thought was what in the hell is a Chinook

salmon doing up here this time of the year?

No sooner got that thought out of my head and the line was peeling off the reel so fast the handle was just a blur. I didn't dare get my hand even close to the reel but just let the fish run. I wondered if it would ever stop, as I was way into the backing in what seemed like seconds.

The fish finally stopped before it took all the backing, but there were only a few wraps left when it did. I knew well enough not to put any pressure on the fish, and just laid the rod to the water and let the river belly the line below the fish. It gradually swam all the way back to me, and I started to put the pressure on, Man oh man, it took off down stream again, at the same blistering speed as the first run. Fortunately this time it only went two thirds of the distance of the first run. I used the same tactic of letting it come back up without pressuring it. Then when it got back even with me, I put the pressure on again. Only it wouldn't have any of that. This fish decided to head for the other bank and did so 5 or 6 times but each time I was able to turn it. Then it went mid-stream and just swam slowly

wherever it wanted to. I had quite a bit of pressure on by this time, but it didn't matter at all. Now, I was fishing with a 13'-8" CND Skagit Specialist, lined with the Airflow Compact Skagit line. No lightweight outfit here. But this fish didn't care.

I finally got a look at the fish for the first time since the initial jump, and man oh man, it's not a salmon but a huge steelhead!! Even then, I still didn't know how big it really was, as the clear water demagnifies what is below the surface. But the strength and weight on the rod tells me it's a big one.

Somewhere close to 20 minutes later, I am finally able to get some sort of control of this beast, but when I tried to lead it into shallow water, it went nuts and rolled and flipped and ran back out into deeper water. I had to play this guy much longer than I would like to, but had no choice, as this fish was more in control than I was. Now I am not a novice when it comes to landing big fish, and have taken quite a few from 15 to 26 lbs in the past. But this one was beyond any of those and was kicking my butt.

Well, I finally got this guy tired enough to lay over and I slid him into shallow water. Heh, shallow is a relative term, as when this fish was laying on it's side and touching bottom it's really not as shallow as I would have liked for taking a quick shot with the camera and of course removing the hook. Barbless of course, but hooked well into the bone of the jaw. I never would have had a chance if it had hooked in just the flesh of the mouth.

I held tension on the rod and walked out to the fish to tail it and guide it closer to shore. Yeah right. The wrist of the tail was so large that I couldn't grip it with one hand, so I had to drop the rod in the water and used both hands to grasp the wrist of the tail and guide it to shore. Now is when the full impact of how large this beautiful buck steelhead really is. I have never seen a steelhead this huge, let alone catch one. Oh man, I am starting to shake. I know that this battle has taken a long time, so I hurriedly retrieved my rod and laid it along side the fish and took a couple of quick shots with the camera. Then I measured the length with the rod. There are inch marks on the rod out to 39 inches, and it's 40 inches to the middle of the first

ferrule. The fish was 3 to 5 inches past the ferrule. Also checked the girth, which was 24 inches.

Then removed the hook and grabbed the big fella and guide him gently out into the river. I held him for the longest time and made sure he was fully revived. In fact, I didn't let go of him, but held on until I couldn't hold him any longer. He made such strong kicks after he revived that I could no longer hold on. I felt totally secure in that he survived to continue on to perpetuate the species.

Now that he swam away, I was so drained of adrenaline and week from ecstasies of the whole ordeal that I couldn't even start fishing right away. I had to go up farther onto the bank and find a log to sit on for a while and revel in what had just transpired.

If the fish were only 40" long and 24" girth, the weight would be 33.88 lbs!! This

fish was 43" to 45" long. Truly a fish of a lifetime, caught right here on my home waters.

The best part of all, this was not an April Fools Joke. I have the pictures, and a head full of wonderful memories. I do a re-run in my mind every now and again, just to keep this experience fresh in my memory. Then I do a big fist pump and think YEAH!

This story by Rick Wiita describes his experience on April 1, 2009 encountering a fish that many of us only dream of. Rick has lived in the state of Washington for many years but was originally from Two Harbors. He was one of the group that met in Jim's Bait Shop years ago forming the LSSA. Here is one of the "Old Masters" at the Skagit River, swinging a Skagit Minnow, on a Skagit line with a thirteen foot Skagit Special rod. Sometimes dreams do come true.



SAVE THE DATE



**Spey Casting Demonstrations, Instruction, Tackle
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WWW.STEELHEADERS.ORG**

LSSA 2016

Spring Banquet

dinner, raffle & silent auction



April 16th

- Mr. D's Bar & Grill
5622 Grand Ave,
Duluth, MN 55807
- 5:30 pm
Registration & social hour
- 7:00 pm
Annual meeting & elections
- 7:15 pm
full dinner buffet
- 8:30 pm
raffle winners announced

Banquet open to LSSA members & guests
Pre-Registration Required - No walk-ups

Raffle and auction items include fishing rods, reels, tackle, clothing, pottery, carvings, restaurant and hotel gift certificates, custom crafted cedar furniture and artwork.

Menu:

Roast Top Round of Beef, Au Jus
Oven Browned Turkey Breast
Fresh Tossed Caesar Salad
Fresh Fruit Platter
Baby red potatoes w/parsley
Dessert, Coffee
Cash Bar

Please RSVP before April 4th

By phone: 218.525.5960
By e-mail: Kevin Bovee outriderduluth@msn.com
Or by mail: LSSA, P.O.Box 16034, Duluth, MN 55816



LSSA Member Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

of tickets: _____ @ \$25. Total enclosed:\$ _____

Bois Brule River Steelhead Survey Summary

By Paul Piszczek, Senior Fisheries Biologist, WDNR Superior

In December, personnel from Wisconsin DNR's Lake Superior Fisheries Unit – Superior office surveyed steelhead on the mainstem of the river. DNR Brule Fish Hatchery personnel were also on-site to help with vehicle shuttling, boat launching, and photography. The survey began at the Bois Brule Campground and ended a few hundred yards upstream from Box Car Hole.

Nearly 200 steelhead were captured and released using standard boat electrofishing equipment. After capture, steelhead lengths and weights were recorded, as were the sexes of each fish, if evident. Scales were also removed from each fish, which DNR will use during the winter to determine the ages of the individual fish. The data from this survey will be applied to the fall 2015 and spring 2016 steelhead counts at the sea lamprey barrier/fishway viewing window to estimate the age, length, and weight distributions of the steelhead run.



DNR Advanced Fisheries Technician Aaron Nelson operates the electrofishing boat while DNR LTE Fisheries Biologist Kirk Olson watches for steelhead on the Bois Brule River in December 2015. Photo by Bill Gobin, DNR Advanced Fisheries Technician, Brule River Fish Hatchery



Paul Piszczek collects scale samples while DNR LTE Fisheries Technician Kevin Grand holds a steelhead captured during a December 2015 Wisconsin DNR survey. Photo by Gervase Thompson.



A 25-inch steelhead from the Bois Brule River during a December 2015 Wisconsin DNR survey. Photo by Paul Piszczek, DNR Senior Fisheries Biologist.



Steelhead captured from the Bois Brule River during a December 2015 Wisconsin DNR survey. Photo by Bill Gobin.

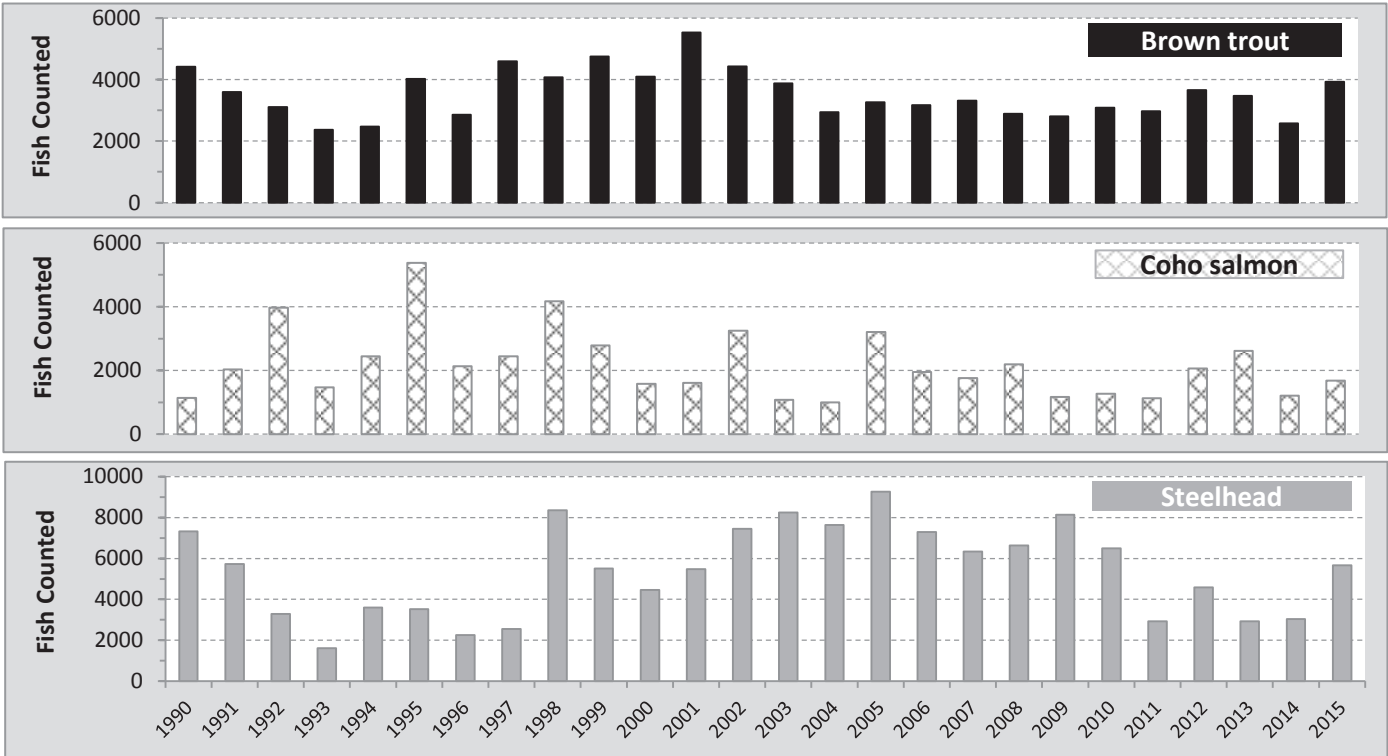


Kirk Olson nets a steelhead from the Bois Brule River in December 2015. Photo by Gervase Thompson, DNR Fisheries Technician, Brule River Fish Hatchery.

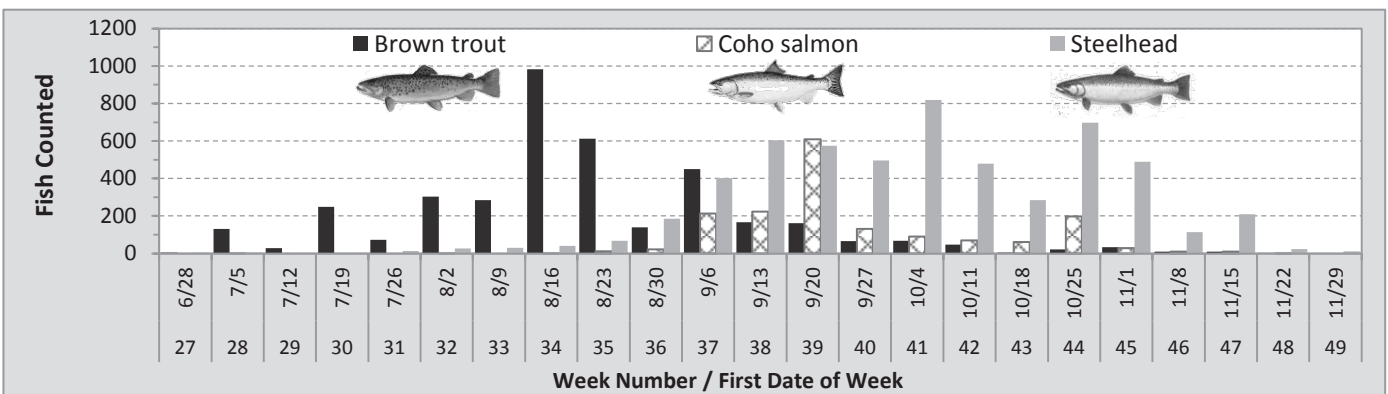
2015 BRULE RIVER FALL FISHWAY UPDATE

Trout and salmon migration was monitored with digital video equipment from July 1 through December 31, 2015. 5,660 steelhead, 3,930 brown trout, and 1,680 coho salmon were counted, along with 278 Chinook salmon, two brook trout, 47 pink salmon, and eight splake. 62% of all counted steelhead ranged from 20 to 25 inches long, and nearly 10% were 12 to 17 inches long, which is within the range of those counted during the past 10 years. 42% of all coho salmon were 19 to 22 inches, and 83% of all brown trout were 18 to 24 inches. See the charts, below, to compare all previous counts to 2015.

FALL FISH COUNTS FOR ALL YEARS OF VIDEO RECORDER OPERATION: 1990-2015



The fall 2015 run timing (i.e., “periodicity”) of steelhead, brown trout, and coho salmon is shown in the chart below. For nearly nine consecutive weeks (except for week 43), steelhead exhibited movements of 400 or more fish. This is much different than the past three of four fall seasons, when steelhead counts exceeded 400 fish for only two or three weeks.



Meeting Minutes

LSSA BOD/Membership Meeting
January 13, 2016 MINUTES

BOD Present: J. Somrock, C. Wistrom, G. Siverson, C. Wilson, M. Pitan and K. Bovee. P. Sandstrom also present.

1. Gambling Report: All required monthly reports and schedules were sent out for review, discussion and approval. Also, required worksheets needed to compile report also presented for review and discussion. Motion by Siverson to accept the gambling report as presented. Motion seconded by Pitan and Motion passed. Other gambling business: compliance letter from MGCB presented to board along with LSSA responses to each item. Discussion followed concerning a donation to SLRA for \$ 1,000 to be used for oversight of construction projects in the estuary. Donation cannot be used for lobbying. Motion made by Siverson and motion seconded by Somrock; motion passed. Wilson to draft letter to SLRA specifying use of donation.

2. Treasurer's Report: All is well with the account. Dahl to coordinate with Bovee and get the donations from the gambling account in the general fund.

3. Newsletter Update: The next issue should have several announcements for upcoming events: banquet, membership renewal, mentoring. Bovee to contact editor.

4. 10 LSMP Update: Wilson gave the update: LSSA had to get their comments in for the last revision. DNR to summarize all pertinent comments and possibly include some if not already in plan. Then get the revision back out and after that go to a public input period. Meetings to be held in several spots around the state. May see final plan by late summer.

5. Grant Update: Biggest item is the ongoing work for possible construction project on reaches 9 and 12 this coming year. LSSA will once again apply for SOGL (Save Our Great Lakes) grant this year. Bovee to work on that. SOGL info due by noon on February 17, 2016.

6. Mentoring Update: Classroom dates are March 12 and 19 at Hartley nature Center. Start at 10 am sharp! Mentors be there

about 15 minutes prior to start.

7. Fly Expo Update: LSSA will once again have a booth. S. Thorpe to coordinate the manning, set-up, etc. March 18 – 20 down in the Metro.

8. St. Louis River Association Support: The LSSA was approached for a letter of support for their ongoing rehabilitation work in the estuary. Also looking for funds to help defray costs associated with ongoing work projects. See Gambling above.

9. Round Table: Wilson and Bovee to attend. This coming Friday down in the Metro, Brooklyn Park. LSSA to pick up travel expenses.

10. Other Groups' Updates: No one meeting yet for the New Year. Sandstrom gave brief update on NE Landscape Plan that is ongoing. Emphasize the Knife River watershed in their discussions.

11. Old/New/Other Business: Second annual Spey Day on the Brule. Webpage to have all current updates. Board fishing trip-nothing new.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kevin J. Bovee, Secretary

LSSA BOD/Membership Meeting
February 10, 2016 MINUTES

BOD Present: M. Pitan, G. Siverson, C. Wilson, S. Somrock, D. Dahl, K. Behn, C. Wistrom and K. Bovee. P. Sandstrom also present.

1. Gambling Report: All required monthly reports and schedules presented for review, discussion and review. Also, all schedules, etc needed to compile report presented for review and discussion. Motion by Dahl to accepts the gambling report as presented. Motion seconded by Siverson and motion passed. LSSA rec'd the final audit letter accepting our proposals to their letter of last month.

2. Wilson presented a bill due to ET for some work that was performed last spring pertaining to grant work that was performed. This had to do with beaver dam removal, etc. Motion by Pitan to reimburse ET the cost of this work from the general fund/gambling account in the amount of \$ 15,180. Motion seconded by Wistrom and motion passed. NOTE:

Bovee and Wilson abstained from vote due to possible conflict of interest.

3. Treasurer's Report: Treasury in great shape. Gambling reimbursed general funds for several approved projects.

4. LSSA BOD Gathering: The Board will rent McNeil's Cottage down on the Brule for a fishing weekend get away. Club to pay for lodging and food. BOD members pay for travel.

5. Brule Spey Day Update: Sandstrom working with vendors to come with product. S. Thorpe working on vendors also.

6. Mentoring Update: the 2016 mentoring project gets under way on March 12 and then again March 19 with the two classroom sessions at 10 am at Hartley Nature Center.

7. Grant Update: Administrator presented the recent Status Updates that were required for the two grants. The update for the first grant had been accepted and approved by meeting night. The update for the second grant had been presented on time to state but not approved by meeting time.

8. Banquet Update: April 16, 2016. Mr. D's in Duluth. Same cost- \$ 25 per person. Reservations required.

9. Newsletter Update: Have to get the date in the next couple issues for the Planking Party-July 9, 2016 at Brighton Beach in Duluth.

10. 10 Year LSMP Update: No new word.

11. Relocation of 1+ Steelhead for 2016: DNR has agreed to several spots on the main West Branch for release of these fish. Working to try other spots higher up on the main stem of the Knife.

12. SOGL Grant Update: to be submitted by noon (11 am our time) on February 17. Applying for a project on Stanley Creek. Highest priority of So. St. Louis SWCD. Motion by Siverson to officially approve and proceed with SOGLK application. Motion seconded by Pitan and motion passed unanimously.

13. Old/New/Other Business: Spring beaver migration discussion ensued. Bovee to look into some type of project similar to last year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kevin J. Bovee, Secretary



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