

STEELHEAD NEWS

A Publication of the Lake Superior Steelhead Association

www.steelheaders.org

May/June 2018: Issue 399



Charles Haberman with a North Shore Steelhead



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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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From the Editor

This issue features an article by our new co-editor, Nik Wilson. Nik is a student at South Dakota State University, and is a graduate of the LSSA mentoring program. Nik's article is about Tim Carroll, one of the true old-timers on the North Shore and a mentor to many steelheaders. Thanks Tim and thanks Nik for your article. Thanks also to Charles Haberman for his cover photo and other photo contributions. Also, thank you Jeff Donegan for a batch of photos.

This issue also contains a wrap up by Kevin Bovee of our Knife River Clean-up, which is happening as I work on this edition. It's a timely article. I am still a little upset about an incident that occurred on the Knife this spring. My Labrador found and ate a spawn bag with a hook, a pile of line and a snap swivel this spring on the Knife. Although she was tied to a bush and I scoured the rocks for

anything she could get into, a couple inches of snow concealed somebody's litter and I looked down from fishing to watch monofilament slide down her throat as she munched away. That was the end of fishing for me, as I headed immediately to the vet in Duluth, and then to emergency surgery at U of MN Animal Hospital in St. Paul. The summary of it is she is fine. Besides the trauma to her, it cost me a FORTUNE and I lost ten days of fishing as I monitored her recovery. I was mad at myself, mad at her and mad at my fellow anglers. There should not be a need for a Knife River Clean-up, although there certainly is. We should be capable of picking up and pocketing our own trash. It's not just on the Knife, its every river. It's not hikers, visitors or others leaving this garbage. It's us steelhead anglers. Sorry to rant.

Text me at 612-669-9601 or e-mail me with articles and photos at scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com.

Mays Ledges, Brule River.

Note the cabin in distance and anglers fishing in what is now the refuge. April 1970 approx. Photo from David Thorpe



Post Card From The Past.

News and Notes

Compiled by Scott Thorpe

Portage Creek Steelhead Study

Jon George, former OMNR fisheries specialist has completed this seasons field work on Portage Creek. He reports that there has been a steady decline in the adult steelhead population over the past ten years due to high mortality of juveniles (smolts) during their first year in Lake Superior (probably interaction with increasing numbers of top predators) The result is an adult steelhead population in Portage Creek presently around 200, a decline of 85% from historic levels. Each spring we tag, clip and scale sample by sex each steelhead. This enables us to achieve an annual population estimate and life history (stream years, lake years, age at maturity, number of spawning events and total age by sex).

This program is a partnership in science between the OMNR and the North Shore Steelhead Association. This research study has been conducted each year for the past twenty-seven years. It is the longest annual quantitative study on a wild steelhead population on a Lake Superior tributary. For more information see the NSSA web site: "<http://northshoresteelhead.com/project/portage-creek> *Jon George*

2018 Knife River Clean-Up

Kevin Bovee reports. Folks living near Lake Superior know how nasty the weather has been the last couple days. On June 1st, the temperature down in the turkey woods (near Caledonia, MN) was 89 degrees and the 'feels like' temp was 95. It was a whopping 46 degrees at our house with a 20+



mph spanking east wind. Saturday, June 2nd started out no different with just one exception, heavy rain was forecast for later in the morning, through most of the day and into the evening. But the scheduled clean up event was rain or shine, hopefully the rain would hold off.

A group of dedicated anglers and LSSA members gathered at 8:30 am at the Rec Center in Knife River. It was very reminiscent of some nasty April mornings when fishing was the main event, not picking up garbage. The following good folks braved the wind and cold to help out: Mike Pitan, Lauren Pitan, Brittany Oberaigner, Jeff Somrock, Keith Behn, Paul Sandstrom, Dennis "Jase" Johnson, Gary Siverson, Mary and Kevin Bovee.

We picked up both sides of the river from above the Cable Hole below the Expressway down to the Scenic 61 bridge near Emily's. Stocking caps and hoods (or both) were the dress code. Many thanks to these folks that dedicated a Saturday morning to brave the cold and clean up the Knife River. By the way, the skies opened up and a very cold rain began to fall in earnest less than 15 minutes after we pulled into the driveway. I think I even saw a snow flake flash in front of the truck on the way home from the river. It was a chilly 40 degrees. *Kevin Bovee*

South Shore Grade Removal Update

Regional clubs are continuing to raise funds to help the WI DNR cover the cost of removing the abandoned South Shore & Atlantic railroad grade over

Nebagomon Creek, a tributary to the Bois Brule. Donations continue to come in. As of May 31st, pledges and donations total slightly more than \$51,000.

WI DNR has also committed \$45,000 in state trout stamp funds for a non-governmental donations and state funds total of just over \$96,000. The WI DNR has applied for and is still waiting for word on a federal grant of \$38,000. If that request fails, we are still approximately \$34,000 short of what is needed yet to complete the project in 2018.

Thanks to the LSSA and all others who have pledged funds to this important cause. Information about the rail grade can be found at: <http://bruleriversportsmensclub.com/south-shore-railroad-grade-update/> *Dennis Pratt*

Planking Party

The 2018 Planking Party will be held June 30th, 5:00 pm at Brighton Beach in Duluth just off North Shore Drive. Great view, good food, and good company. Bring layers to bundle up in if the wind is off the lake and a lawn chair is a good idea. People who are planning to attend should check the website at www.steelheaders.org for last minute weather related confirmation of the event and to RSVP on the website contact page. The event is open to all members and their guests. There is no charge, but donations are welcome.



Upcoming Events

LSSA Planking Party
June 30, 2018

Brighton Beach Rd, Duluth, MN

Brule Spey Day
September 8, 2018

McNeil's on the Brule, Brule River, WI

Steelheader Profile: Tim Carroll

By Nik Wilson

Tim Carroll has been fishing the North Shore for over 60 years. Carroll started fishing when he was just 10 years old when he caught some chubs in a creek near his house.

“I was 10 years old and I figured I’d go out there and try some worms. All I caught was chubs. I thought they were trout,” Carroll said.

Carroll enjoyed his early experiences with fishing, even though it was a bit challenging at times.

“It wasn’t easy, but it was fun. I’m catching chubs, and I think I’m catching trout. And I had my mother cook a chub actually,” Carroll said.

In 1958, he went up to the North Shore and fished with nightcrawlers in the Sucker River.

“We were down in the tunnel hole, me and my brother Joe, and I was fishing with nightcrawlers and I caught my first steelhead. And that was 1958. I caught one fish that year,” Carroll said.

Carroll improved the following year when he caught four steelhead during the spring in 1959. During the spring of 1959, he also met his mentor, Ted Petersen.

“Me and Ted went fishing in the fall just about every day. We had a lot of rain, and he showed me the way,” Carroll said.

One time, Ted hooked three or four steelhead. Tim and Ted switched spots. Ted hooked two or three fish where Tim had just been standing. Tim said that Ted would catch six fish each day and Tim would catch two on average. Carroll started fishing with spawn bags in 1962. He used treble hooks through 1962 on the Knife River, but his friend, Larry Peterson, advised him to switch to single hooks because it would help him become a better fisherman.



*Tim Carroll at the Second Falls on the Knife, around 1962.
Photo from Tim Carroll.*

“Single hooks are going to make us better fishermen” said Peterson.

During this time Carroll also realized the effectiveness of fishing with flies. “If I had realized these fish hit flies, I would’ve fly fished in the goddamn 20’s,” Carroll said. “That’s where you work the fly rod, is fly fishing for steelhead.”

Carroll stopped fishing with nightcrawlers. Even though nightcrawlers were a popular bait, they weren’t safe for the fish to consume. Carroll remembered hearing about a guy who caught two steelhead and the fish swallowed the nightcrawlers and died.

“I was hoping they’d catch the guy,” said Carroll.

So, people started to fish with flies more often. Unfortunately, this also caused problems. The success of flies and the number of people fishing eventually hurt the fish population in some rivers.

“The Brule is being overfished,” Carroll said. “Every 26-inch fish I see caught is killed in that river.”

Fly fishing appealed to Carroll because the fish seemed to bite the flies very aggressively.

“It’s very satisfying to hook a fish on a fly. I mean the rush is 10 times greater. When they take a fly, they take a fly. They about take the rod out of your hand sometimes”.

Carroll’s success with fly fishing eventually landed him one of the biggest fish he’s ever caught. In 2005 or 2006, he caught a 29-inch steelhead while fly fishing in the Lester River. Two of the biggest steelhead he ever caught in his life were from the Lester River. He thought they were king salmon. While Carroll enjoyed success with flies, he also wanted to learn how to catch steelhead with yarn. Jerry Tessier taught Carroll how to fish with yarn. Carroll believes that fishing with yarn is the hardest way to catch fish.

Carroll believes Jerry Tessier and Ted Petersen were two of the best fishermen he ever knew. "He brought the yarn here. He showed the guys how to use it. Between him and Ted, you could flip a coin. These two guys were just the most phenomenal yarn guys that I think ever lived on the Knife River," Carroll said.

Carroll has noticed that fishing with yarn is a challenging technique for fishermen to master. "There's some good yarn fishermen ...there's just so many good ones, but then there's people that don't know how to fish damn yarn," Carroll said.

During Carroll's time of fishing at the Knife River, which is his favorite river, he's noticed some problems that threaten the livelihood of the fish population.

"Steelhead used to go over the falls three weeks steady. They went over the falls three weeks in a row, just like they do on a rare day now. Because

if they went over the falls, I mean for three weeks in a row, not every day but you know there would be three or four days, then there would be a little lull for two or three days, then they'd come again, another great big run of fish," Carroll said.

"We figured there was anywhere from four to ten thousand. We couldn't even predict, there were so many fish. One morning in the Sucker Hole, I counted a hundred fish killed."

"Here's one thing to take note of that didn't help the steelhead run. In 1967, the second falls was closed to fishing. Later that year, the second falls was opened to fishing due to a surplus of steelhead. Carroll disagreed with the decision. "There's no such thing as a surplus of steelhead," Carroll said.

"So, that contributes in the long plan of the steelhead run being diminished. Because you guys can't believe how many people fished up there then"

While Carroll has had success as a fisherman, he also believes it's important for the older generation to pass on their talents to the next generation.

"I taught my son and he's an excellent steelhead fisherman. He'll stand in with the best of them... My grandson, Brian, I always give him the best drifts when we go fishing. And already he's gotten older and everything and he's doing really well."

"Now he says he does the same thing now. He says when he takes someone fishing, he puts them right in the best drift. He says 'I know where you're coming from. I'm really glad you did that for me.' You put your kids in the best drifts. You've got to," Carroll said.

Our North Shore steelhead fishing is strongly rooted in the tradition of sportsmanship, thanks to the contributions of dedicated anglers like Tim Carroll.

A background photograph of an outdoor campsite. In the foreground, a fire pit with a small fire is visible. Several large wooden planks are leaning against a wooden frame. In the background, several people are sitting on green picnic tables, and a woman in a blue jacket is standing. The scene is set in a grassy area with trees in the distance.

PLANKING PARTY
BRIGHTON BEACH
JUNE 30TH, 5:00 PM
Members and their guests welcome.
No charge but donations appreciated.
RSVP to website www.steelheaders.org

2017 BOIS BRULE RIVER FALL FISHWAY UPDATE

Steelhead	Brown Trout	Coho Salmon	Chinook (King) Salmon
4,788	3,634	4,482	450

Wisconsin DNR monitored upstream trout and salmon migration with digital video equipment from July 5 through December 6, 2017. The Steelhead count of 4,788 was 35% of the total fall trout and salmon run. One Brook Trout, 190 Pink Salmon, and 25 Splake were also counted. Nearly half of all Steelhead ranged from 20 to 25-inches long, and 26% were 12 to 17-inches long. 70% of Coho Salmon were 19 to 22-inches long, and 14% were 23 to 28-inches long. 71% of Brown Trout ranged from 18 to 24-inches long. Charts A, B, and C, below, show the fall 2017 counts relative to previous fall counts and illustrate how the relative run sizes of these naturally reproducing fish fluctuate over time.

FALL FISH COUNTS FOR ALL YEARS OF VIDEO RECORDER OPERATION: 1990-2017

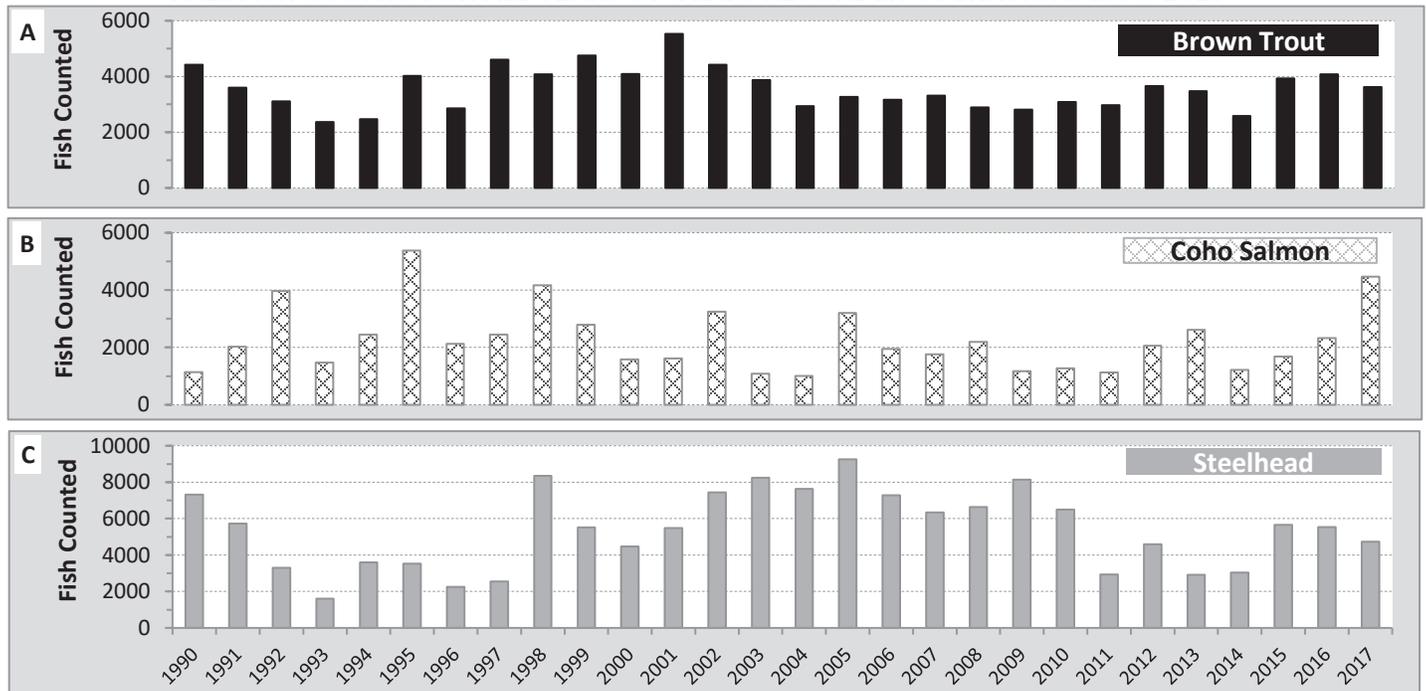
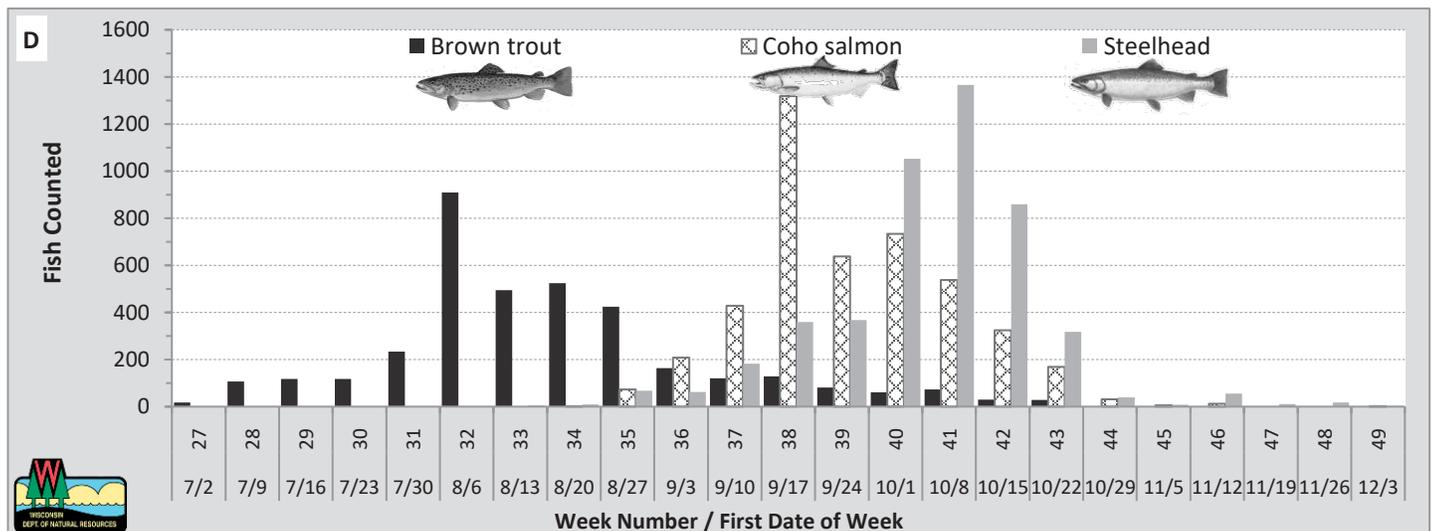


Chart D, below, shows the fall 2017 run timing (i.e., “periodicity”) of Steelhead, Brown Trout, and Coho Salmon. Steelhead movement peaked during early to mid-October, with three consecutive weeks of over 800 fish. Upstream migration of trout and salmon slowed abruptly in late-October, with the arrival of unseasonably cold weather and near-freezing water temperatures.



How Big Was That Steelhead?

By Scott Thorpe

Have you ever wondered how much that steelhead you just caught and released weighed? Was it the mythical ten pounder or maybe better? Back when I was a bit younger, and you could still keep steelhead, I had a little black tool called a Fisherman's De-Liar, a little spring scale and a tape measure in one handy unit. The spring scale was extremely inaccurate, made more so by being put away wet and eventually the thing rusted and the whole thing was worthless. But I used it often enough to learn a basic principle: a 25" steelhead weighs about 6 lbs, 26" about 7 lbs and so on up to about 30" when a steelhead weighs about 11 lbs. My rule of thumb is to tape it, drop the first digit of the measurement, add a one for an up bound fish and subtract a one for a drop back. It's a pretty handy rule-of-thumb but below 25" and above 30" the whole relationship falls apart. For one thing, upbound females weigh more than upbound males of the same length. Also, an inch of body on a 30" fish is heavier than an inch of a 25" fish.

The Atlantic Salmon Federation recently sent me a Salmometer, little laminated note card with another version of a simple length to weight ratio, specifically for Atlantic salmon.

Measured for tip of snout to the fork in the tail, their chart shows a 25" salmon weighs 6.6 lbs.

26" = 7.4 lbs	29" = 9.8 lbs
27" = 8.2 lbs	30" = 10.7 lbs
28" = 9.0 lbs	31" = 11.8 lbs.

Atlantic salmon and steelhead are different fish, but not that different. Either they are denser than steelhead or my De-Liar was way off which is quite likely.

You can get more accurate is you start taking two measurements: length and girth. For trout, one common formula is $(\text{length} \times \text{girth} \times \text{girth})/800$. For example $(26" \times 15" \times 15")/800 = 7.31$ lbs. This system better accounts for the condition of individual steelhead.

In the 1920's, a British gentleman named Mr. Sturdy developed a scale of length to weight, using dozens of monster Atlantic salmon actually caught, measured and weighed on the Evenger River in Norway. These anglers were catching huge fish, and the Sturdy scale starts at 30". A 30" salmon weighs 11.57 lbs, a 31" salmon weighs 12.77 lbs.

Review the statistics from the Knife River fishway, or Jon George's Ontario studies. Very few steelhead from Lake Superior are over 30".

Catch one and celebrate. You might never land another.

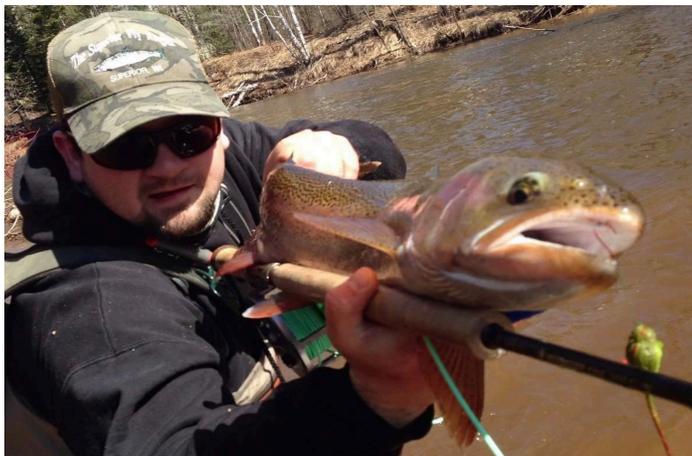


Top: Jeff Donegan with a Brule steelhead. Middle: seated left to right Tom "Tammy" Cawcutt, David Olson and Joe Parpala. Standing, Gerry Olson. Big winners (and big spenders) at the 2018 banquet. Bottom: Mike "Doc" Sierszen on a sunny Brule day.



*Above:
North Shore
Traditions
by Charles
Haberman.*

*Right:
Mike Pitan with
a swung caught
steelhead.*



February 7, 2018

LSSA BOD/Membership Meeting MINUTES

BOD Present: M. Pitan, C. Wistrom, J. Somrock, G. Siverson, and K. Behn & K. Bovee. Others Present: P. Sandstrom & C. Wilson.

1. Gambling Report: All monthly forms were sent for review, discussion and approval. Motion by Siverson to accept the gambling report as presented. Motion seconded by Behn and motion passed.

2. Treasurer's Report: Treasury in good shape. Treasurer asked why we ordered 35 reels for the mentoring class. Answer was 20 for regular class and 10 for the advanced mentoring class. The LSSA rec'd a better price break on 35. Any extras will be used in 2019.

3. Newsletter Update: S. Thorpe has found a team of replacements to take over the production of the newsletter. Thorpe will work with the team on a couple issues before he steps down. LSSA will pursue doing the newsletter in digital format for Pro Print (option 3 on their proposal). Team includes Jason Koop, David Olson and Nik Wilson.

4. Grants Update: Phase II-Reimbursement Request #15 has been submitted. Work slowing down greatly for this phase of the Knife River habitat work. Will want to monitor the spring runoff and any high water events over the summer. Grant must be closed out by June 30, 2019 and we expect it to be done prior to that date. Ph III-Funding should come through on July 1, 2018 for this next phase of the Knife River work. It encompasses approximately 2300 lineal feet of Reach Four. Lake Superior Coastal Grant-LSSA Board of Directors directed committee to submit the grant proposal. This is a federally funded grant (NOAA) administered by the MN DNR. LCCMR-discussion by the board was to submit a request to LCCMR for \$ 200,000 to begin work on the beaver meadows on the upper Knife River just below the Old Drummond

Grade road. Motion made by Siverson to pursue this grant. Motion seconded by Wistrom and the motion passed.

5. 2018 Relocation Project: Due to the genetics issues going on, LSSA thought that stocking in Trib 9 and at the West Over Bridge would be the best idea. Stocking at Big Rock on the main stem is option number 3. Pitan to forward these ideas to MN DNR.

6. WI LSMP: Meeting was scheduled for last night but LSSA could not attend. Next meeting is scheduled for March 5 in Ashland. It's a long day for those attending: working all day, driving two hours to Ashland, sitting through a long meeting and then driving home another two hours-trying to miss hitting deer on Hwy. 2.

7. Governance Calendar:

- January-Round Table
- February-Relocation and spring beaver activity
- March-Mentoring projects
- April-Banquet
- May-LSOHC Grant requests due
- June-Knife River clean up and planking party
- July-discuss Christmas Party
- August-Angler discussion for next year
- September-Spey Day and set banquet date (if Angler approved)
- October
- November-Get to Hartley Nature Center for mentoring kids
- December-Christmas Party (if agreed to) and commit to Round Table

8. Old/New/Other: Mentoring-all the kids are booked-all young men this year with several parents taking the class. New Hat Colors-Bovee to look into possibly ordering new colors. Advanced Mentoring-50 emails went out to those young people that had attended the regular mentoring program to see if they had interest in the fly fishing side of steelheading.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kevin J. Bovee, Secretary

March 14, 2018

LSSSA BOD/Membership Meeting
MINUTES

BOD Present: M. Pitan, C. Wistrom, J. Somrock, R. Fjoser, K. Behn and K. Bovee. Membership present: P. Sandstrom & C. Wilson.

1. Gambling Report: All required monthly forms were presented for review, discussion and approval. Motion by Behn to accept the report as presented. Motion seconded by Somrock and motion passed. Other News: We have been notified of our 18-month audit by the MGCB for the period of August 2017 through January of 2018. We have hired another person down at the Reef Bar operation. Her name is Vickie Luck.

2. Mentoring: We had the first class room session last weekend and everything went well. This coming weekend is the second and final classroom session. River session to be dependent on spring's thaw.

3. Banquet Update: April 21, 2018 at the Clearwater Grille.

4. Newsletter: Editor always in need of stuff. Will check on schedule for another notice on the banquet.

5. Brule River Culvert Issue: The group is approx. 50% of the level of funding that they think they will need to fix the issue. They have started a Go Fund Me page.

6. SH Plan As Mentioned in Cook Article: S. Cook wrote an article on the status of both the Kamloops program (ended) and on the status of the steelhead resource. There is a discussion on replacing a clipped steelhead fishery for the now closed Kamloops program. An egg source was a question that the BOD had. French River steelhead may not supply a sufficient number of eggs for the quantity of fish mentioned in the article. It seems like DNR replacing a hatchery fishery with another semi hatchery fishery.

7. WI LSMP: March 5 was the latest

meeting covering mostly the sturgeon resource. Outline of the past meetings and discussion points to be presented to the advisory group by about mid April

8. Grants Update: PH II-line of credit has been reduced due to the winding down of the project itself. Hopefully this will save the LSSA some monthly interest charges. **MN Lake Superior Coastal Program Grant: this grant is federally funded by NOAA and administered by the MN DNR. We have been approved for our \$ 50,000 request with the final submission due tomorrow. This grant covers assessment, design and permitting of our Reach 4 project. **LCCMR recently modified their internal policy to include nonprofit groups to apply for grants. LSSA submitted a proposal for review. This is a good way to get more leverage dollars for our LSOHC grants.

9. Knife River Clean Up Date: Decided on June 2, 2018. Meet at the Rec Center in Knife River at approx. 8:30-rain or shine. Let's get it done.

10. Old/New/Other: Next Arrowhead Fly Fishers meeting on March 20. Sandstrom to do a power point presentation on the LSSA. All LSSA members invited to attend. **Discussion on possibly working with DNR to get equipment in to recreate the Cable Hole on the Knife. That stretch of river totally filled in with cobble and rock during the 2012 Solstice flood. Wistrom and Pitan to look into it. **Two donations were discussed and approved by the board: \$ 500 donation to both Hartley Nature Center and the Rock of Ages Lighthouse Preservation Society. Motion by Wistrom, seconded by Somrock and motion passed. **LSSA response to letter from S. Kuiti has been sent. **A group from UWS-Students for Science-inquired to the LSSA if there would be any interest in the LSSA having a booth at their science fair on an upcoming weekend in Spring.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kevin J. Bovee, LSSA Secretary



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