

A History of TU in Montana: Five Decades of Conservation

by Bruce Farling

Doing research for a retrospective on Trout Unlimited in Montana is not unlike stalking a wise old brown trout. The target is elusive and you are unsure exactly where to place your fly. You see darting shadows. You can read the micro-currents. You know the fish is there. But you can't quite hook up. Assembling a historical account of our organization at the end of its 50th year means searching for documents that no longer exist, scraping together what you can and tapping hazy memories for events and people from the distant past. Many dots are left unconnected. It is a story that deserves better diligence than we can provide. Still, no amount of research would change these fundamental facts.

It is clear that the very beginnings of TU in this state emerged over coffee in two places, Livingston and West Yellowstone. And at every step in the fertile TU story, which began in the early 1960s, there were – without exception – uncommon people. And one name stands above all. Dan Bailey.

From the day he moved to Livingston in 1938 from New York State to open a fly shop in the railroad town of Livingston until his death in 1982, Bailey's love affair for the Yellowstone and angling sustained him. Though he would befriend and fish with angling legends such as Joe Brooks and Charlie Waterman, Bailey always took time in his shop to chat with everyday anglers, especially kids. He was a humble and quiet force who came to understand that good fishing and wild trout need impassioned advocates. Since the mid-1950s, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation had wanted to plug the Yellowstone River south of Livingston with the Allenspur Dam, a 380-foot monster that would inundate more than 32,000 acres of the Paradise Valley. Bailey and a group of dedicated anglers in the early 1960s resisted. They had become the first and most effective line of citizen defense for the river. In part because of their efforts, the proposal was eventually forestalled. But it would materialize again the next decade.

Beginnings

Though the exact details and timing is a little murky, it appears that in 1962 and 1963, Bailey, along with his good friend Bud Morris, owner of the Parade Rest Ranch on Grayling Creek near West Yellowstone, and some other Livingston-area anglers started building the first TU chapter in Montana. The first membership meeting occurred in 1963 at Chico Hot Springs. Charlie Waterman was a guest speaker. Bailey, Morris and others then created the Montana Chapter of Trout Unlimited, which National TU, then only five years old, officially chartered in March 1964. The mailing address was Morris' guest ranch. At the time it was one of only 16 TU chapters nationally. State councils had yet to be formed. Today, the official 1964 charter resides in the Montana TU office. It was signed by TU founder and President George Griffith, and Art Neumann, TU's first executive secretary -- both long recognized nationally as leading visionaries of trout conservation.

During TU's early days in the mid-1960s, the Montana chapter and national organization had their hands full. There were dams to fight besides the Allenspur project. The Bureau of Reclamation and its messianic Commissioner Floyd Dominy (who John McPhee famously wrote about in his book *Encounters with the Archdruid*) were busy scheming new projects for the North and South Forks of the Sun River, the Middle Fork of the Flathead River and, famously, on the lower Big Hole, it proposed the Reichle Dam, which would block the river seventeen miles above Twin Bridges. Watching with concern was Montana's small and dedicated TU cadre. The first president of the Montana Chapter was Bud Lilly, then a fishing guide and fly shop owner in West Yellowstone. Other officers and principles included Bud

Morris, who served as the first vice-president and then became the second president; and Mert Parks, who started a flyshop in Gardiner. Pat Sample, a feisty female angler from Billings served as Secretary. Bailey by that time had become a national director for TU. National TU's president in the mid-1960s was Martin Bovey, of Massachusetts. His name is familiar to Montanans. The Bovey family eventually came to own Virginia City, Montana's first Territorial capital.

Today, Ennis resident Bud Morris recalls the early, hard-fought conservation efforts. He and other anglers who favored the Madison River kept busy fending off large-scale clearcutting that the Forest Service was engaging in at the headwaters of the Gallatin and Madison Rivers. The TU crew also advocated for revolutionary approaches in angling and fisheries management. Bud Lilly and others, of course, were extolling the virtues of a radical new angling ethic, catch and release, which they rightfully argued was necessary for sustaining wild trout populations. In the mid-sixties, Ennis guide Dick McGuire was preaching an even more radical idea: Montana Fish and Game should stop planting hatchery fish in rivers and instead manage for wild fish. At this time many native fisheries, such as the Madison's cutthroat and grayling populations, had long been supplanted by introduced rainbow or brown trout. The state abetted the conversion by continually flinging hatchery rainbows into the Madison and other rivers like wedding rice.

Morris recalls that wild fish management found favor with the department's regional biologist in Bozeman, Bud Gaffney. In turn, a forward thinking chief of fisheries in Helena, Art Whitney, also agreed that the idea had merit. But he insisted it be tested scientifically. In 1966, the department tasked Dick Vincent, a young biologist, to develop a study on the Madison River and a tributary, O'Dell Creek, that could compare the productivity of hatchery-stocked reaches with those left to their own devices, that is, wild fish. The proposal was blasted in meetings in Ennis, where the culture of whacking and stacking remained strong. In a 1994 interview, Vincent said, "The meetings were wild...almost to the point of violent at times, certainly abusive as far as verbal abuse goes." TU's leaders, however, backed the department. The study commenced. Ten miles of the river near Varney were managed for wild fish.

The results of the nearly 6-year effort were seismic. Vincent's data clearly proved planting the Madison with catchable-sized rainbow trout, at \$2.50 a piece, produced an inferior fishery in terms of both abundance and angling quality. Whitney took the results to the Montana Fish and Game Commission and proposed halting stocking of rivers throughout the state. It worked. In 1974 the commission endorsed wild trout management for all Montana's cold-water streams. It was an extraordinary victory for Dick McGuire, TU and the foreword thinking state biologists. To this day the policy sets Montana's remarkable trout fisheries apart from the more pedestrian hatchery-supplemented fisheries found in other states.

Prior to the controversy over wild fish management, TU in Montana had been growing in strength and reputation. In 1966, the national organization held its annual convention at the Finlen Hotel in Butte. The reason: To focus on defeating the Reichle Dam project proposed for the lower Big Hole. Killing this proposal was a TU national priority. This controversy, along with a proposal to dam the forks of the Sun River and creating a reservoir inside the Bob Marshall Wilderness, merited feature stories in the fall 1965 issue of Trout magazine. At the time Bailey was a national TU director, as was Loren Hammer of Butte. Both were instrumental in keeping the Reichle Dam on TU National's radar. Both men as well as Montana Chapter President Bud Morris put in countless hours organizing the Butte gathering. From early on the Montana Department of Fish and Game opposed the Reichle project, and for good reason. It would turn 10 miles of the trout-rich lower Big Hole into a reservoir. The only apparent beneficiaries would be a few ranchers in the Jefferson River valley who would benefit from subsidized irrigation on about 50,000 acres.

But the department's position on Reichle changed in 1967. Director Frank Dunkle, who later had a short and star-crossed career overseeing fish and wildlife programs in the Interior Department, decided, at the urging of Montana Legislature, that the department would drop its opposition. The decision enraged Big Hole enthusiasts and Trout Unlimited. Interestingly, at the time Tom Smith, a young biologist from the department, became TU national's paid executive director. His job, among other things, was to rally the troops against the dam his former boss now embraced. The controversy became more charged in 1967 when Montana Congressman Arnold Olsen introduced legislation in Congress to authorize the Reichle project. Over the next few years, the proposal floundered because of its cost, and because conservationists in Congress and the Johnson Administration opposed it. But the idea of a dam on the Big Hole didn't completely expire.

A conservation group emerges

In 1966, there was no mistaking how TU, still based in Saginaw, Michigan, saw itself. It was clearly a conservation group comprised of angler-activists. Other national battles focused on beating back road construction in the Great Smoky Mountains, as well as a huge federal water project in Utah, and dams planned for the Grand Canyon and on the Little Tennessee River (the famous Tellico Dam, which was eventually approved and, because of a nondescript but beautiful little fish, the snail darter, became the first acid test of the nation's new Endangered Species Act). TU national, along with other conservation groups, also pushed Congress to improve water quality laws and pass a National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Because of the great distances between communities and Montana's small population, organizing statewide was a challenge in the early days. The first attempt to localize TU came in the summer of 1968 when conservation-minded anglers in Livingston led by Montana Chapter Secretary-Treasurer Warren Shepard created the Yellowstone Chapter. They signed up 50 new members. Instrumental to the effort was, of course Dan Bailey. The leadership also included activists Fred Terwilliger, Chester Marion, and newly installed chapter Vice President Ben Williams, who still lives in Livingston and is renowned as a leading authority on bird dogs and upland bird hunting. Montana now had two TU chapters.

Through the late 1960s and into the early 1970s, the Yellowstone Chapter focused on defeating the Allenspur Dam, as well as dealing with mining pollution from the Jardine area and sewage that the communities of Livingston and Gardiner dumped into the Yellowstone River. The chapter also engaged in educational efforts for litter prevention and catch-and-release, adopting the slogan, "Creel your litter...Don't creel your limit." Bailey was also engaged in efforts to preserve public access to Armstrong Spring Creek near Livingston. When the O'Hair family proposed selling it to a private fishing club, Bailey helped convince the family to keep it open to the public using a rod-fee system.

Which TU chapters in Montana were created next is a little unclear. But it appears that the Madison-Gallatin Chapter came right after the Yellowstone Chapter. It was formed after Dan Bailey urged Bozeman-area anglers to get active. An early conservation issue that remains to this day for the new chapter was the effects the Madison River Dam at Ennis was having in limiting the fishery of the lower river. The chapter was also in the middle of the fight for wild fish management. In 1969 the Spring Creek Chapter was chartered in Lewistown. Around then, the Montana Chapter morphed into the Montana Council, now colloquially known as Montana TU. TU National was now chartering councils as umbrella organizations for states with multiple chapters. The exact birthday of the Missoula-based Westslope Chapter is a puzzle, but it appears to be in the 1970s. The Billings-based Beartooth Chapter also emerged in the early 1970s. One of its early leaders, Harry Miller became a director for the national

organization and he succeeded in convincing other directors to hire the first staff in the Northern Rockies. Miller was a long-time board member of the Montana Trout Foundation, a private endowment that provides funding for wild trout conservation.

National TU chartered the Bitter Root Chapter in 1974. We know this because a founder, Marshall Bloom, is still a considerable force in the chapter. TU National recognized his years of dedication to TU, serving as a chapter and Montana Council leader, as well as being a former trustee for the national organization, with a distinguished service award at last September's national meeting.

The River Rat

In the early 1970s a pivotal TU chapter emerged, largely because of another exceptional man. Like Dan Bailey, George Grant had amazing prescience for what matters to rivers and trout. And also like Bailey, he had an abiding love for a magnificent Montana river, the Big Hole. The Butte native had fished the Big Hole since the 1920s. When employment was scarce during the Great Depression, he moved into a little cabin on the river and spent days on end fishing. He acquired a keen eye for what affected the river and its fishery, which he later wrote featured very large rainbow trout and few brown trout until around 1950. In the 1960s he occasionally visited with Bailey. They talked about the dam fights, Allenspur and Reichle. They talked about TU. In 1972, Grant and a few friends started the Rocky Mountain River Rats, the Butte chapter of Trout Unlimited. He became chief writer and editor for the River Rat, the chapter newsletter. In its pages Grant left few stones unturned in his passionate defense of rivers and wild trout.

The River Rat eventually became the first newsletter of both the chapter and Montana TU. Grant remained the chief Rat and newsletter editor until 1979. The publication featured illustrations by Harvey Eckert, a talented illustrator who worked in Fran Johnson's Sport Shop, long an institution and TU supporter in Butte. Revenue from ads helped fund the publication. The newsletter featured Grant's fire-breathing opinions about harm caused by development and thoughtless anglers. He ran frequent letters from well-known angler Dave Whitlock, and even ran essays by Montana historian K. Ross Toole. The newsletter also included advocacy pieces written by Montana Fish and Game biologists such as Jim Posewitz. In those days department staff were much less hampered by politics. Being an acclaimed fly tier and angler, he of course included occasional pieces on these pasttimes. He created a regular column called "Taking Five with the Old Angler," which was a collection of aphorisms, wisecracks and digs at environmental despoilers. The "old angler" was never identified. But the writing resembled Grant's.

First and foremost the River Rat focused on the issues of the day, a number which were tackled by Butte-based chapter. Many are familiar. There were the Reichle and the Allenspur Dam stories, of course, but the newsletter also told of TU campaigns to prevent irrigators from damaging streams. The stories also addressed the challenges of improving stream flows and protecting wild fish with more restrictive angling regulations. TU members learned about industrial pollution, including particularly awful incidents when fish were wiped out in the Clark Fork River and Little Prickly Pear Creek. Years before big-time development took root here, Grant argued for protecting open space and riparian corridors. In 1975, Grant and local TU leaders, including Tony Schoonen, a schoolteacher and fishing guide who had grown up in Twin Bridges, became alarmed at the increase in channel manipulation that was occurring in the Big Hole and other area rivers because of increased irrigation. They led a landmark effort to convince the Montana Legislature to eventually pass the Streambed and Land Preservation Act, known commonly as "the 310 Law." The law has helped rein in indiscriminate channel damage by requiring permits and conservation district review of projects that affect the bed and banks of perennial streams.

In the mid-1970s, the Allenspur Dam proposal had been revived. The impetus was new proposals to strip-mine huge portions of Eastern Montana for coal. The projects would need water and the Yellowstone was handy and nearby. The dam builders and other water developers saw this as their opening to further drain the river and build a dam. But by now Bailey and TU had a new champion: Montana's fish and game department. Jim Posewitz, a fiery state biologist, was born for the challenge. The department employed a tool from the new Montana Water Use Act to save the river's flows: an instream flow reservation, a type of legal appropriation that would set aside water for river flows in perpetuity. Posewitz employed every media resource – public and private -- he could wrangle. The battle to save the river drew national attention and continued for four years. TU members created a Save the Yellowstone fund. It was chaired by Livingston angler and TU leader Tom Travis. Its goal: Raise money so that TU could intervene in the formal reservation proceedings on behalf of the department. In 1979, the Board of Natural Resources and Conservation approved the reservation request. Posewitz and the department, and their TU allies, prevailed. The Yellowstone and its major tributaries would have a water right for instream flow protection. The Allenspur proposal evaporated.

At around the same time, the second coming of the Reichle Dam emerged. Grant and the River Rats reloaded. Finally, thanks to an alliance that Grant and Schoonen had formed with influential ranchers on the lower Big Hole –and their success in getting Montana Senators Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf to oppose the project—the feds shelved the proposal. It was another huge victory for Grant, TU and wild trout.

The Landmark Stream Access Victory

In the late 1970s Grant began writing about another emerging issue. Land ownership along trout rivers was starting to change. Newcomers arrived who were less tolerant of the long-held Montana stream access traditions. Generally, any stream deemed navigable was assumed, for good legal reason, to be open to the public. Trying to head things off, Butte Representative Al Luebeck introduced the first stream access bill in the 1975 Legislature. It failed, but controversy over access continued to grow. In the late 1970s, no-trespassing signs appeared more frequently on public rivers. Eventually a landowner on the Beaverhead River and another on the Dearborn River constructed fences across channels to prevent floating. Stories emerged about hostile ranch employees kicking people off the streams.

Concerned anglers responded, creating the Coalition for Montana Stream Access. The chief actors were Butte –area River Rats, Tony Schoonen, Tom Bugni and Jerry Manley. Having observed another battle pitting the State of Montana and anglers against the Crow Tribe over who owned the bed of the Bighorn River, the Coalition knew their cause would not be easily advanced. The landowners went to court to keep the public off the rivers. Some agricultural organizations supported them. The TU-backed coalition employed the Goetz law firm of Bozeman to defend access. Articles appeared in Trout magazine telling TU members around the country how they could support the Coalition. Eventually, cases brought by Mike Curran on the Dearborn and Lowell Hildreth on the Beaverhead ended up in the Montana Supreme Court. In 1984, the Supreme Court ruled that the Montana Constitution deems that water capable of supporting recreation was the public's to use, irrespective of who owned the banks and bed. The details were left to the Montana Legislature to figure out. The 1985 Legislature, with anglers and anti-access groups such as the Montana Stockgrowers Association compromising, came up with a middle-ground access law. The law was refined slightly by another case in the 1980s, but because of the foundation established by Schoonen, Bugni and the other River Rats it has survived all subsequent legal challenges and stood the test of time for 24 years.

Ever the iconoclast, Grant, though named Conservationist of the Year by TU National in 1978, resigned as editor of the state council newsletter in 1979. He felt the organization wasn't tough enough and didn't square with his views. In a letter he sent to Grant, then Montana TU Chairman Bob Foukal, expressed regret and deep gratitude to Grant for his passion and achievements. It was clear Grant would be missed. Though he continued to work with the local TU chapter, Grant went on to a new mission -- forming the Big Hole River Foundation, funded at first by sales of his books and fly collections. The foundation's mission is to work with landowners and others to conserve the Big Hole River and its magnificent valley.

George Grant died at the age of 102 in 2008. His legacy, as well as those of other early TU champions Dan Bailey and Bud Lilly have been memorialized in Three Men, Three Rivers, an award-winning 1993 video produced by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

The Chapters Grow

Though the state council was certainly active, many of TU's achievements in the 1980s were chapter driven. Missoula's West Slope Chapter, which had long been an advocate for conservation of Rock Creek's superb wild fish, was co-plaintiff with the National Wildlife Federation in a precedent-setting lawsuit in the early 1980s. The Bonneville Power Association and the Montana Power Company wanted to route a new high-voltage power line through the heart of the Rock Creek drainage, as well as through undeveloped public land around Missoula. The proposal implicated a number of environmental laws. TU's young lawyers, Bill Rossbach, Karl Englund and Tom France -- all three who have since become noted environmental attorneys -- argued that the values of the blue-ribbon trout stream and its valley were being ignored. The lawsuit was settled favorably. The least harmful power line route was selected. Further, the power company set aside \$1.9 million in a state-managed trust fund that would benefit conservation in the Rock Creek watershed. The fund, now managed by a local land trust, has been leveraged for more than 25 years for numerous conservation easements and habitat restoration in the drainage.

Chapter leader and former Montana TU Chairman Ric Smith, as well as attorney Karl Englund, later led a successful effort to influence the federal re-licensing of Montana Power's Kerr Dam on the Flathead River. The effort helped establish an important mitigation fund for restoration of fisheries in the lower Flathead basin. Further, the power company was also forced to release flows from the dam in a more fish-friendly fashion.

The Bitter Root Chapter made its mark in the mid-1980s by working with Montana's fish and wildlife department to secure water for instream flows in the Bitterroot River. The chapter helped the state acquire some 10,000 acre-feet of stored water from the State's Painted Rock Reservoir, paid for by BPA mitigation dollars, in the upper reaches of the Bitterroot basin. This agreement was extended four years ago, with the help of TU national staff, so that the water is available in perpetuity. This water is in addition to 5,000 acre-feet that the Ravalli County Fish and Game Association had wrangled for the water-starved river back in the 1950s. Without TU's Painted Rocks deals, irrigation demands would wring the river dry most summers.

The Northwest Montana Chapter in Kalispell and Whitefish had also been active in the 1980s, weighing in on forest practices issues and water quality protection in Flathead Lake and the river. Over in Libby, a Federation of Fly Fishers affiliate, the Kootenai Fly Fishers, had assumed TU's role in the 1980s. Led by Dave Blackburn, a local outfitter and former logger, the club fought off an attempt to build a re-regulating dam below Libby Dam. It also pushed hard for improved fishing regulations to

improve the Kootenai River's wonderful rainbow fishery. The club eventually was chartered as a TU chapter, allowing the Northwest Chapter to focus on the Flathead and change its name 13 years ago to the Flathead Valley Chapter. The Kootenai Fly Fishers were dropped as a TU chapter in the 1990s in order that a new TU Chapter, the Kootenai Valley Trout Club, could become the formal TU chapter for the state's northwest corner.

Other TU chapter changes occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Montana's first local chapter, the Yellowstone Chapter changed its name to the Joe Brooks Chapter, in honor of Dan Bailey's good friend, who fished the Yellowstone frequently and who inspired anglers world-wide. The Helena-based Missouri River Chapter changed its name to the Pat Barnes-Missouri River Chapter; thereby honoring Barnes, an early guiding peer of Bud Lilly's and once the owner of one of Montana's early fly shops, in West Yellowstone. Similarly, the River Rats in Butte changed their name to the George Grant Chapter, in recognition of the man who mentored the group. The Spring Creek Chapter in Lewistown disbanded, but it has been resurrected twice, and is active today, as the Snowy Mountain Chapter. The Beartooth Chapter of Billings no longer exists. But it has been ably replaced by the Magic City Fly Fishers, watchdogs of the Bighorn and Stillwater Rivers, and one of several hybrid TU-Federation of Fly Fishers affiliates.

Some chapters have come and gone. Dillon and Deer Lodge had chapters briefly. Great Falls had a TU chapter in the mid-1970s. Though there is no formal chapter there now, the independent Missouri River Fly Fishers is comprised mainly of TU members. Years back it was afforded an equal role with TU chapters on the Montana Council. Subsequently it has produced some of Montana TU's best – and most entertaining -- leaders in recent years. MRF and the Pat Barnes-Missouri River Chapter continue today as effective watchdogs for the Missouri and Smith Rivers.

In the late 1980s, conservationists in the Blackfoot Valley were concerned about the poor condition of the Blackfoot River's trout fishery. They also worried about a gold mine proposed along the river near the mouth of Lincoln Gulch. Lincoln native Becky Garland, daughter of Cecil Garland who owned the local general store and who was instrumental in establishing the Scapegoat Wilderness, and Paul Roos, another Lincoln native and a long-time fishing outfitter, hooked up with new landowners Daryl and Sherrie Parker. They, and some key friends and landowners in the valley, such as Mark Gerlach and Land Lindbergh, as well as conservation-minded kin in Missoula and long-time visitors to the valley, started a TU chapter. They hoped it would be the vehicle for revival of the river and for its long-term stewardship. And, boy, were they right. In the last 21 years the Big Blackfoot Chapter has helped fight off two major gold mines while also working with dozens of landowners as well as thoughtful state and federal biologists to create a conservation and habitat restoration effort that is unprecedented in its grassroots scale. The chapter, rightfully, has been lauded nationally inside and outside TU.

In 1994, a handful of employees of the Winston Rod Company and a few guides and other folks who scratch out a living in the Twin Bridges and Sheridan areas formed the Lewis and Clark Chapter of TU. The chapter succeeded in helping establish a voluntary drought plan for the Ruby River, which was a positive outcome of the tension-filled summer of 1994 when demand for irrigation water killed thousands of fish in the river. The chapter also helped broker deals, leading to public access sites along the Ruby. It continues to today as a principle monitor of fisheries in Southwest Montana.

Not all of TU's work in Montana has been accomplished solely by volunteers. In 1975, TU National hired Jim Handley, a Bozeman native, to serve as the first Northern Rockies Mountain Representative for TU. He was to work with chapters in several states and funded by them. He mainly worked with the Montana Chapter, which tried to fund him through the sale of wildlife prints and a

donor effort Billings TU leader Harry Miller championed in 1973 at the national level, called Friends of Montana. Handley was let go in 1976 because funding fell short.

Starting in the late 1970s, Montana TU chipped in to hire part-time lobbyists at the Montana Legislature. It appears the first was a long-time trout bum who had been involved in a successful ballot initiative to ban the construction of new nuclear power plants in Montana. His name was John Wilson. Wilson eventually went on to head the Tourism Bureau in Gov. Judge's Commerce Department. He then spent many effective years securing conservation easements around the state for the Montana Land Reliance. During that period he was a stellar TU volunteer leader. He came back to work for Montana TU after the turn of the millennium, serving as conservation director, a position that took him back to the Legislature. Because of his fundraising efforts, Montana TU was on solid financial footing when he left in 2006. In between fishing expeditions, he still volunteers for the Pat Barnes-Missouri River Chapter.

In 1989, Montana TU hired recovering attorney Stan Bradshaw to be its part-time conservation director and lobbyist. Bradshaw had cut his teeth as a lawyer for the Montana Departments of Environmental Quality and Fish, Wildlife and Parks. He was one of two state attorneys in 1981 who filed at the very last minute the State's natural resource damage claim against the Atlantic Richfield Company for historical mining damages in the upper Clark Fork. The eventual result: A landmark trust fund of more than \$140 million for restoring water sources and fish and wildlife habitat in the upper Clark Fork. For his legal work, Lee Enterprises named him one of Montana's 100 most influential Montanans in the state's first century. His TU work has been no less important. Bradshaw was influential convincing the Legislature to allow Montana FWP to lease water rights for instream flows, and he has been at the center of every single advance in water policy in the state in the last 20 years. His involvement on TU's behalf in closing the upper Missouri River basin to new surface water rights was huge. He left Montana TU in 1993 and now works for TU National's Montana Water Project.

In February 1994, the state council took a big leap and hired its first full-time executive director. In 1999, an administrative staffer was added. Two years later the position of full-time conservation director was created. Five years ago we hired an outreach director to complete a four-person staff. Several years ago, the Big Blackfoot Chapter hired a full-time project coordinator, a positive development unheard of nationally in TU.

The last 15 years of TU in Montana need not be repeated here. It's been amply chronicled in Trout Line, Trout magazine, at chapter meetings, in state council gatherings and even in the media. Today membership in Montana is around 3,300. We have 13 chapters and many top-notch volunteer leaders. Much work is occurring. TU is recognized by many as a conservation leader in the Big Sky State. Montana TU is one of only four state councils with paid staff. But few things we have accomplished, as well as hope to achieve, could have occurred without the early vision of a few forward-thinking anglers who knew this was a special place, with special rivers. We owe them much.

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