

Trout Unlimited not about fish

Keeping the Credit viable goal of TUC

By JOHN STEWART
Staff

Jim Wilson is a fisherman on a mission.

He wants to clean up the Credit River for a multitude of reasons: because it's good for the brook and rainbow trout that inhabit the river's upper reaches; because it's good for everyone who lives along the river to have cleaner water; and because it's good for business at his fly fishing shop in Toronto.

"A lot of my customers fish the Credit and I want to give something back to the sport," says the Port Credit resident, who's also a top commercial salesman at Royal LePage in Mississauga.

He's chosen to do that by becoming one of the anglers who are part of Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC), a volunteer organization dedicated to improving water quality in the rivers they fish.

In an interview on the banks of the Credit in Meadowvale Village, Wilson outlined TUC's efforts to rehabilitate Peel's most spectacular watercourse.

"A lot of people don't realize that the Credit is one of the most fished, if not the most-fished, river in Ontario," says Wilson.

Despite its name, Trout Unlimited is a water conservation organization, not a fishing one, notes the national director.

After completion of the comprehensive Credit Fisheries

Management program in 1999, TUC partnered with Ontario Streams, the Izaak Walton Flyfishing Club and the Upper Credit Trout Club to begin rehabilitating the critical upper portions of the river where trout breed.

"Everything that starts up there affects everything downstream," notes Wilson.

Development over the years has denuded stream banks, increased water temperatures and promoted erosion which is detrimental to fish habitat.

Over three years under the direction of biologists from Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) and the Ministry of Natural Resources, TUC hopes to spend \$150,000 to plant trees, stabilize river banks, and re-establish "riffle" sections which scour out silt and oxygenate the water.

It has recruited a number of Mississauga sponsors including the Petro-Canada Lubricants plant and Royal Bank. The key to continuing the program is attracting more corporate support.

A \$70,000 grant over three years from Ontario's Trillium Corporation is boosting the effort.

CVC Biologist Bob Morris says the work being done on the Credit simply wouldn't occur without the driving force of Trout Unlimited.

The group was critical in the process from the beginning, pro-

viding funds to hire staff to develop a sound plan of attack.

Since CVC lost most of its funding from the Ontario government several years ago, it either finds new partners or work doesn't get done.

"We're hoping it makes a big difference," says Morris. While the work is good for fish, it also has myriad other positive environmental impacts.

While many of the impacts are long-term (tree-planting may not shade the river for 20 years), others aren't. While doing fish surveys this summer, workers found five brook trout in the stretch of river they've started on. Three years ago, there were none there.

Starting a new chapter in the south end of Mississauga where he lives is also a priority for Wilson.

Trout Unlimited is always looking for more volunteers. It holds regular work days where families and students can get involved. The next scheduled event is a tree-planting day Oct. 13.

The problems with water quality on the Credit weren't created in a day and they'll only be solved through a concerted long-term effort by agencies, governments and volunteers, says Wilson.

He's just happy that finally the will to get the work done seems to be in place. Now it's just a matter of finding the bodies and the dollars to finish the job of reviving the river where trout and salmon once teemed.



Staff photo by Rob Beinterna
Kathryn Maroun and Jim Wilson, directors of Trout Unlimited, at the Credit River.