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June 27, 2007

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Charles F. Gauvin  
President  
Trout Unlimited  
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RE: Participation in Disputes Over Stream-Access Rights

Dear Mr. Teufel and Mr. Gauvin:

On behalf of the board of the Zane Grey Chapter of Trout Unlimited, I write to provide you our view on the issue of whether Trout Unlimited or any of its state councils or local chapters should participate in stream-access efforts. It is our belief that, in appropriate circumstances, it is important for Trout Unlimited to engage in these efforts. Ultimately, Trout Unlimited will not be able to protect what its members cannot access.

We are aware that this has become a divisive issue. We provide our opinion not because we wish to criticize anyone; everyone involved has the same good intentions. Rather, we express our view so that it can be considered in what we hope is a broad discussion resulting in a compromise which allows us all to move forward together.

As mentioned above, we believe that TU will fail in its mission if its members and hoped for future members cannot access the rivers and streams they are being asked to help protect. Without access, they will not develop a connection to these places. TU members need to see a positive impact from the organization or they will not be involved in it.

Stream-access efforts will continue to grow in importance. The population is growing, development in our wild places is exploding, and more and more land owners will attempt to block access. The love and care for the streams and rivers will fade if all that

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is left to enjoy are overcrowded waters or those for which you must "pay-to-play." For those of us born and raised here in the west, this is most definitely not an acceptable situation. Trout Unlimited should have broader appeal than to just those who are not offended by the idea of often having to rent a place to fish (and who have the money to do it), who are rich enough to own land with access, or who are willing to fish in crowds.

TU members are altruistic. Many will stay on even if protecting coldwater fisheries means lending their manpower, votes and funds to efforts which largely do not benefit them. But what about the next generation? If a booming population, encroaching development and shrinking access does not allow the next generation the same opportunity we have had, they will not care about the rivers and streams the way we do, and Trout Unlimited's membership will shrink and be less committed.

Trout Unlimited recognizes how important it is that the next generation develop a concern for our cold water fisheries. We all recently received a request for funds to support a program to teach children how to fish and tie flies. This is a wonderful program for a number of reasons; chief among them is that doing so serves our mission. If the children learn to enjoy fishing then they will learn to love the streams the way we do, and they will fight to protect them. Without access to the streams, however, they will have no opportunity to develop the commitment we need.

"Stream-access" does not appear anywhere in Trout Unlimited's mission statement. Neither does anything to do with taking kids fishing or teaching them how to tie a fly. Yet, both are necessary means to the same end: conserving, protecting and restoring cold water fisheries.

We know that there are concerns with engaging in stream access efforts, including that any resulting disputes could become a drain on needed resources. However, we believe access is so critical that it warrants the expenditure. We also support the idea of a TU Stream Access Working Group to monitor TU's involvement in this type of matter and to make sure that in all stream-access efforts Trout Unlimited is in a position to have an impact consistent with its goals. This seems to be a viable compromise which we hope will be revisited. We also think it worthwhile that, if a compromise is not readily available, you consider educating all Trout Unlimited members on both sides of the issue and inviting their input.

We will be watching this matter with great interest. Thank you for the opportunity to share our prospective.

Very truly yours,

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JMS/cs

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