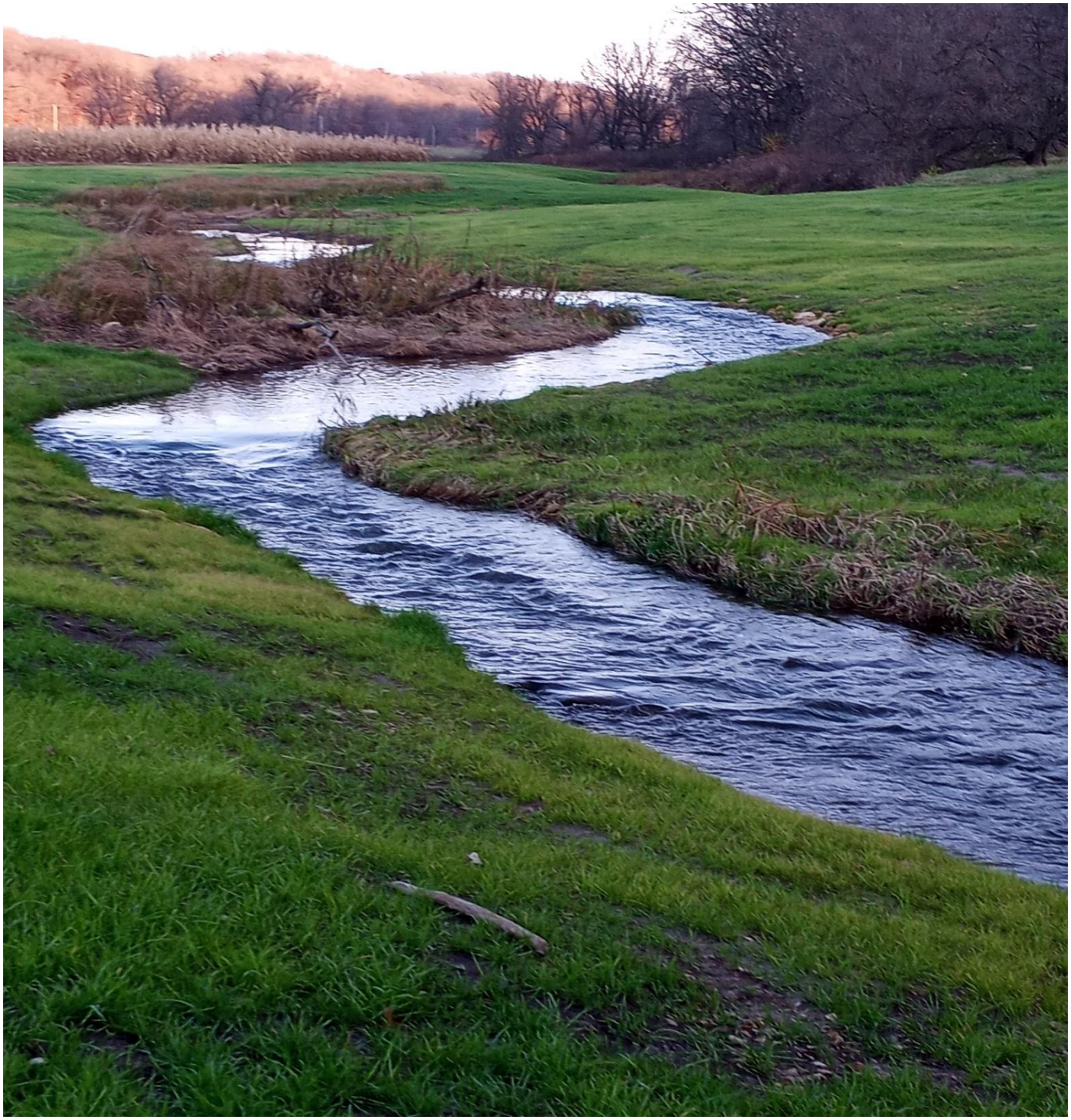
HARRY AND LAURA NOHR CHAPTER OF TROUT UNLIMITED

2024 BLUE RIVER PROJECT



Report Prepared by the
Project Committee
Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter of Trout Unlimited

Sponsorship and Partners

The role of the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter in this project was to serve as a project sponsor and leader. The chapter does not have the financial resources to undertake a project of this magnitude alone; it is necessary to collaborate with other organizations for volunteer labor and financial assistance. The Nohr chapter, as always after any major project, is indebted and grateful for the help it has received through the year. We also look forward to continuing these joint ventures in our ongoing habitat improvement efforts.

The partners for the 2024 Blue River Stream Habitat Improvement Project are as follows:
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Conservation Service of Iowa County
Terry Geurkink and James Sanger
Elliot Donnelley Chapter TU
Trout and Salmon Foundation
Friends of Wis. Trout
Madison Fishing Expo
Badger Fly Fishers
Lee Wulff Chapter TU
Gene Mazewski
Tom France
Peter Melby

The amount of spoil removed required extensive seeding and mulching.

Two small wetlands were installed as part of the project. They were sited adjacent to the stream

Background

The Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter of Trout Unlimited undertake habitat improvement projects as a part of its mission "to conserve, protect, and enhance the cold-water streams of Southwest Wisconsin". In 2003 the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter approved a plan to improve the habitat of the Blue River and its tributaries. Because of the importance of the Blue River and its tributaries as cold-water resources in a matrix of lands with unusually great potential for conservation, the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter has focused on habitat restoration along these streams. This report addresses our work on a section of the Blue River conducted in the summer and fall of 2024.This stream segment is approximately 5400 feet in length. We had an interest in making improvements to this site for several years.

Upper photo is of the current project site. Photo below is an aerial photo of the same site from 1937. We discussed recreating a couple oxbows from the lower photo in the project, but for various reasons we were not able to do this.

Stream Conditions Before the Project

Six-to-eight-foot vertical banks and channels with heavy sediment were common throughout the project length.

Eroding stream banks typical throughout the project site.

Stream and Riparian Improvement Work

In 2024 the Harry and Laura Nohr Chapter of Trout Unlimited along with its partners improved stream habitat along approximately 5,400 feet of the upper Blue River. Eroding stream banks were tapered. Thousands of yards of stream-bank spoil were removed from the flood plain. Rip-rap medium was used to armor eroding stream banks, weirs were installed to improve the riffle-pool-run topography, and log and rock deflectors were installed to improve stream sinuosity and provide overhead cover. In addition to these structures (log deflectors, rock deflectors, weirs, cross logs, root wads, and rip-rap armoring) two small wet land scrapes were installed adjacent to the stream to benefit turtles and amphibians as well as migratory birds (ducks, geese, cranes etc.) Before and after photos below on pages 9-11 were taken in April and November 2024.

The previous photos show a bank being tapered and rip-rap being installed. The above photo shows the final shaping being done. The lower photo shows a weir that was installed with several log deflector sets that were installed above it.

Many of the trees removed from the stream banks were utilized as log deflectors. Staggered on both sides of the stream they provide overhead cover as well as create some sinuosity in the wider, straighter sections of the stream. A number of weirs and cross logs were also installed which will help keep the channel scoured and prevent some of the sedimentation from reoccurring. Root wads and rock deflectors were also utilized in the project. Only a few areas in the project segment had low, stable banks that did not require us to taper or armor. Otherwise, most of the entire stream length required work on both sides.

A field road existed between the tree line and stream so bank tapering was limited, but enough rip-rap was utilized to assure bank stability. A backwater area that was created is visible in lower picture.

The lower picture is same site as above after shaping, armoring and weirs installed.

Conclusion

This is the farthest upstream on the Blue River that we have done a stream improvement project. We originally targeted this site for work almost 20 years ago. Ownership changes of the property and other reasons precluded us from doing the work until now. We think there is some interest from a couple of landowners above this site for work to be done on their segments of stream as well. This work on the upper Blue can be a capstone to all the previous work we have done on the lower segments of Blue River. This fall several redds were observed in this improved section.

We would like to thank all our partners that made this project possible, especially the current land owners Bernie Straka and Tim and MaryJo Lawson.

Trout Unlimited Sampling Sites

Lat/Long Units in Degree Decimals

Start = Downstream end; End = Upstream end

River	Big Spring	Big Spring	Blue River	Blue River
Site	2018 Restoration	Drews 2023	Upper_Novak	Willow Springs
Start Latitude (N)	43.080871	43.101762	42.995093	43.000496
Start Longitude (W)	90.423524	90.470096	90.394496	90.403503
Start Elevation (ft)	807	722	929	278
End Latitude (N)	43.080101	43.101186	42.994490	43.000218
End Longitude (W)	90.420903	90.468377	90.393497	90.400585
End Elevation (ft)	815	722	931	279