

Local Fishing Chapter Benefits GSMNP Brook Trout

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As part of their on-going efforts to support the Fishery Department of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park (GSMNP), members of the Little River Chapter of Trout Unlimited (LRTU, Maryville, TN) labored many hours to organize and execute their first TroutFEST in June 2004 on the banks of the Little River in Townsend, TN. They succeeding beyond all expectations, and the Appalachian Brook Trout will be the better for it. As illustrated in the above photo, their efforts resulted in a check for

\$7,620 to be used as seed-money for native Brook Trout habitat restoration in the GSMNP. It is expected that this money will be used in initial restoration efforts on Indian Flats Prong.

In the photo, Dale A. Ditmanson, the new superintendent of GSMNP, along with Matt Kulp, Fishery Biologist, and his supervisor and long-time champion of the Brookie, Steve E. Moore accept a check from LRTU's president, Joe Hatton, as key members of the TroutFEST staff watched. Also in the photo (l-r) are Roy Hawk, LRTU Treasurer, Herb Handly, Townsend Visitor Center Manager, Superintendent Dale Ditmanson, Fishery Biologists Matt Kulp and Steve Moore, LRTU President Joe Hatton, and Charity & Ian Rutter, along with members of LRTU as supporting cast.



BROOK TROUT (*salvelinus fontinalis*)

What's a TroutFEST?

TroutFEST was a two-day, outdoor conclave for fun and education, based on the partnership of LRTU and GSMNP. LRTU hoped that their first TroutFEST would raise awareness of the plight of the Brookie and of the efforts of the GSMNP in championing the restoration effort. The event was so well attended and well organized, that it generated a generous gift to the GSMNP, something unexpected for a first-time event.



TroutFEST was held on the grounds of the Townsend Visitor Center. Their front lawn was covered with artists, crafts, and vendors focused on an outdoor-theme, and a storytelling tent. On the back lawn were food, music, and an educational exhibit centered on ecological efforts of the GSMNP, Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency, Little River Watershed Assoc., Great Smoky Mountain Institute at Tremont, local 4-H chapter, UT, and LRTU. There were also hands-on demonstrations of rod building, fly tying and casting. Wanda & Gary Taylor of Calhoun, TN, nationally recognized experts in fly-fishing circles, provided casting instructions to neophytes and veterans alike, then hosted a casting contest on the open lawn area. Punctuating the event was a banquet and auction held at the Maple Leaf Grove.



Numerous business and industry benefactors around the area supported the LRTU efforts, without whom the TroutFEST would not have launched or succeeded.

Why the Brookie?

When research in the early 1970's showed that the range of the Brookie had diminished dramatically, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park began a program to reintroduce the Southern Appalachian Brook Trout, the only trout species native to the Southern Appalachians, to as much of its original territory as possible. The purpose of this program is to reestablish stable reproducing populations in healthy streams and to insure this unique genotype is protected and preserved.



In conversations with Joe Hatton, President of the LRTU, and Dale Ditmanson, Superintendent of the GSMNP, at the presentation ceremony under the pavilion at the Townsend Visitor Center, both indicated

their desire to continue the partnership that has worked so very well to enhance the opportunities for our children and our children's children to learn about and enjoy the native Appalachian Brook Trout.

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